

17<sup>TH</sup>

**EUROPEAN SERVICE MEETING**



2013

**CARRY OUR MESSAGE  
THROUGH SERVICE**

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## European Service Meeting

# STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The primary purpose of the European Service Meeting is the same as that of all AA activity – to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, whoever he may be, whatever the language he speaks. The European Service meeting seeks ways and means of accomplishing this goal by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength and hope of delegates who come together from all parts of Europe. It can also represent an expression of the Group Conscience throughout Europe.

Experience teaches us that developing a sound structure enables us to deliver our services more effectively. The European Service Meeting encourages the planning of the sound structures suited to the needs and capabilities of the various countries and the exploration of expanding AA Services to reach the alcoholic through internal communication, community relations and institutions work.

## Summary

From the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2013, delegates gathered from the following countries to attend the Seventeenth ESM.

Austria	Lithuania
Belarus	Malta
Belgium (Flemish Speaking)	Netherlands
Czech Republic	Norway
Denmark	Poland
Finland	Russia
France	Slovakia
Germany	Slovenia
Great Britain	Spain
Iceland	Sweden
Ireland	Switzerland (French Speaking)
Italy	Switzerland (German Speaking)
Latvia	Ukraine

Also present were Phyllis H, General Manager at GSO New York and Rick W, observer from the International Desk, GSO New York.

Registration and reception were held during the afternoon, at this time old friendships were rekindled, and new friendships were made. Informal discussions took place in a relaxing and upbeat atmosphere over coffee.

The 17<sup>th</sup> European Service Meeting was opened by the Chairman – Kristin L who gave a warm welcome to all, and the Keynote Address was presented by Phyllis H from GSO New York.

On Saturday the work began in earnest with the Committees and Workshops taking place throughout the day. During the evening the atmosphere took on a more relaxing pace with the Sharing Meeting which saw presentations from Martin S (Switzerland) and Jarmila K (Slovakia) on the theme: “Service in Action – My Responsibility”.

During the Sunday morning session, three 2<sup>nd</sup> Term delegates: Ad S (Netherlands), Marc B (France) and Helle V (Denmark) plus Rick W from New York, were invited to speak about their thoughts and experiences during the events of the weekend.

Penny A (Great Britain) was elected Chairman of the Eighteenth European Service Meeting.

Lotte R (Austria) was selected to prepare a report on the Seventeenth European Service Meeting for presentation at the 23<sup>rd</sup> World Service Meeting in 2014, and report back on that World Service Meeting to the Eighteenth European Service Meeting in 2015.

A vote was taken and it was agreed by a substantial majority that the Eighteenth ESM will be held in York, England.

An Agenda Committee for the Eighteenth European Service Meeting was formed and will consist of the following:

Penny A	Chairman – Eighteenth ESM
Colin T	Chairman – Agenda, Policy, Admissions, Finance
Patsy O’K	Chairman – Literature, Publishing, Media Communications
Geoff H	Chairman – Working with Other Countries
Roger B	Secretary – EIC

The Agenda Committee will meet on from 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> June 2014 to submit and discuss all questions forwarded to them between now and July. The Agenda will be set for the Eighteenth European Service Meeting.

Finally, Kristin L our Chairman, closed the Seventeenth European Service Meeting with a highly inspirational address, and invited all those assembled to join in the Serenity Prayer.

# Agenda Digest of the 17<sup>th</sup> European Service Meeting 2013

## Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October

Registration and Reception  
Welcome and Opening Address  
Twelve Traditions  
World Service Meeting Report  
Keynote Address  
Country Reports

## Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> October

Committee Meetings  
Questions and Answers Session  
Workshops  
Presentation & discussion following Committee Reports  
AA Sharing Meeting on the theme: *'Service in Action, My Responsibility'*

## Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> October

Presentation & Discussion Workshop Reports  
Eighteenth European Service Meeting

- Time and Place
- Election of Chairman
- Election of ESM Delegate to prepare ESM Report for WSM 2014 and report back to the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM in 2015
- Formation of the Agenda Committee

Closing Addresses  
Close of Seventeenth European Service Meeting 2013

# **OPENING PRESENTATIONS**

## WELCOME ADDRESS – CARRYING OUR MESSAGE THROUGH SERVICE

### CHAIRMAN – KRISTIN L, NORWAY

Hello everybody and welcome to this 17th European Service meeting here in Frankfurt!

My name is Kristin L and I am an alcoholic from Norway. In 2011 I attended my second European Service Meeting, and in addition to attending two World Service Meetings, I thought it was my last trip to do World Service. It was therefore a big surprise for me to get this chance to Chair this meeting and meet so many old friends again. It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be at Service this weekend.

So far this has been a pleasant experience, and I will thank our wonderful staff for being at service with their experience, knowledge and service minded attitude!

I will also thank you all for making the effort to come here, and a special welcome to those of you who is here for the first time. We will do our very best to help you feel comfortable & safe this weekend and I look forward to learn to know you better. I hope you will feel the great inspiration it is to meet and share experience and hope across Country borders.

The theme for this European Service Meeting is 'Carry Our Message Through Service'.

Service – our third legacy, is often discussed on a national and international level. Also at group level, where the main challenge can be how to inspire people to engage in service. It's a thousand ways into these discussions – I would like to reflect upon some of Bills words about this topic (from the Third Legacy of Service):

Why do we need to do service?

"Our Twelfth Step—carrying the message—is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die."

What is service?

"Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer—ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service."

Where – How - Who?

"Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation, and intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description.



They call for committees, delegates, trustees, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship. These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or A.A. as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make A.A. more simple by abolishing such services. We would only be asking for complication and confusion. Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question: "Is this service really needed?" If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek A.A."

Is this relevant today?

In my opinion – more than ever. We are here today on behalf of our country, and we will be discussing a lot of themes – one of them will be about our new media, Internet, and we can ask the question "Is this service really needed?" If the answer is yes, how do we deal with this? This is one situation where the European cooperation is such a great tool!

We are all here to assist in bringing the message, and at the same time, we serve our sobriety.

The ear-rings I wear have our logo written on it, the triangle in the middle of the circle – and my reflection is:

"A triangle is only a triangle when all three sides are present"

Without the Steps – there is no ego detected – and no need for ego-reduction. No need to engage in unity – since everything still evolves around me. If everything evolves around me – why should I engage in service to others?

When I came to A.A., I was lucky to join a group that emphasized service as an essential part of sobriety. I was immediately encouraged to participate in Service, and that made me feel included in the group, I had a right to be there. At last I was part of something, and through the years I have had the great pleasure of spending time & work with wonderful people - both non-alcoholics and alcoholics.

And over the years it is more & more clear for me what a miracle all our three legacies are. It all begins with me – getting sober – being given a solution to my drinking problem. Learning that to keep this solution I must give it to someone else. And the better my life gets, the more eager I am to bring this to others who is still suffering. I believe that is the main reason that I feel so happy in my life today! And knowing that alcoholism is a family disease, I want A.A. to be here also if one of my grand children develops alcoholism in the future!

However, many of us experience challenges in "recruiting" new people into service, and maybe we feel lonely in our work, there may be disagreements and lack of support. For me it has been such a great inspiration to participate in the World Service Meetings and the European Service Meetings, and I have been inspired to develop my skills and knowledge.

Alcoholics in action – sounds scary!

"Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action."

Alcoholics in action.... How do we do that with a minimum of fights – power games – fear – control – our old habits that – if brought into service work creates so much confusion and wasted time and energy?

Well – as I see it, it's all taken care of within The Twelve Steps, The Twelve Traditions and - not least – The Twelve Concepts.

In my opinion service is also to take the time to read and learn so that I can contribute in a positive way. Being part of well organized service-work is really a great pleasure.

I will end this with a story from the World Service Meeting in Mexico in 2010. When we arrived at the airport we were met by a young man – a few months sober. He came with the bus for two hours, to spend the day at the airport taking care of the delegates. Returned home at night, and came back the next day to welcome other delegates. I will never forget how happy he was because he got the opportunity to serve, serve where needed.

There are so many aspects of service for us to look at this weekend, and I am excited to be here with you. Once again – welcome to this 17th European Service Meeting!

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS - CARRYING OUR MESSAGE THROUGH SERVICE

### PHYLLIS H – G.S.O. U.S./CANADA

My name is Phyllis an alcoholic and a grateful sober member of A.A. I have the privilege of serving as the General Manager of the G.S.O. U.S./Canada. I am delighted to be with you today.

I want to thank GSO Great Britain for your loving invitation to deliver the keynote address at our 17th European Service Meeting with its theme "Carrying the Message Through Service."

In "*A.A. Comes of Age*," Bill writes, "A.A.'s Twelfth Step, carrying the message, is the basic service that our fellowship gives; it is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of recovered alcoholics in action. We *must* carry A.A.'s message; otherwise we ourselves may fall into decay and those who have not yet been given the truth may die. That is why we so often say that *action* is the magic word. Action to carry A.A.'s message is therefore the heart of our Third Legacy of Service."

From A.A.'s beginning with Ebby's visit to Bill, then Bill to Dr. Bob and on down through the years to you and I, all of our lives have been transformed by those who came before us as they shared the message of hope and recovery.

As the power of carrying the message became clearer to the early pioneers, it became evident that a book would be needed to capture the basics of their method of recovery. By way of explanation, Bill W. wrote in November 1951,

*Our word-of-mouth program could be garbled, we might be destroyed by dissension over basic principles, and then our public relations would surely go to pot. We'd fall flat on our obligation to the alcoholic who hadn't yet heard unless we put our knowledge on paper.*

Our Big Book was written and published in 1939. Our pioneers never anticipated the surge of interest the publication of the Big Book would put into play. The program of Alcoholics Anonymous could now be introduced to others who had no physical contact with other members.

We could reach over barriers and borders we would never have been able to cross because we had our program in print. Bill W. described the circulation of our Big Book as "... silently scattering our message worldwide, lighting the path of progress for nearly every incoming member." (*The Language of the Heart, Services Make AA Tick*, pg. 133.) Here was a giant step forward in service – the creation of literature so our message could be accessible to millions more suffering alcoholics.

Group service started almost right from the beginning. Small groups began to develop in the late 1930's and the early members and their families opened their homes for meetings – always making sure that the all-important coffee pot was on hand. In an essay on "Service" in *Language of the Heart* – Bill writes:

*Look now at an AA group. Can pure faith, mere belief in right principle and sound tradition, make the group a going concern? Not in the least. Each AA group, as such, must also function, do something. It must serve its appointed purpose or it, too, withers and falls apart.*

Service opportunities inside the group grew – someone had to collect the money in the hat; someone had to answer the heartrending letters and the many phone calls that came into the newly formed “headquarters” offices. In many groups today, in addition to coffee makers and treasurers, there are Secretaries, General Service Representatives, and the all important Greeters at the doors of the meetings who welcome the shaky newcomers.

The basic message of A.A., as embodied in the Twelve Steps, makes the program work. It is up to us as individuals to make sure our group reflects all that is good about the Fellowship – it is the strength of a group. This is the foundation of all Unity and Service in A.A. It is what all our service entities are built upon. Whatever I do in my group has an effect. If I am careless with A.A. Traditions, the group is careless. If I shun Twelfth Step calls, the group is not reaching its collective hand out to those who need help. Unity and Service begin with me!

As A.A. grew, Bill became deeply concerned for A.A.’s future. He wanted to insure A.A.’s growth and unity so that A.A. could continue to carry its life-saving message. From this concern grew the General Service Structure serving the U.S. and Canada. It also set up a Conference structure that, over time, created a wide variety of service opportunities for members.

Our Conference delegates were able to apply the experience and principles of service learned from the groups to serve A.A. as a whole. Bill wrote in regard to the formation of Conference in *Language of the Heart*,

*Gone was the comfortable illusion that should each AA group tend strictly to its own affairs God would then reward our shortsightedness by guarding AA as a whole entirely by himself – including our Headquarters, AA’s public relations, and the welfare of the millions who still don’t know. The delegates saw that this would spell faith without work and without responsibility. That could never be. Of course much work would always have to be done; much responsibility would have to be taken by many. To AA as a whole, every member would need to give a little.*

Slowly but surely, through the dedicated service of individual members, A.A. spread throughout the world – one alcoholic talking to another alcoholic then another – translations of the Big Book occurring, then groups forming, then service structures being organized - the cycle of recovery, unity and service became the experience of millions.

I recall Dr. Bob’s summation of what A.A. is – he described it as “Love and Service” - love of one alcoholic for another and consistent service to support our efforts to continue carrying the message – this is the fabric of our Fellowship. Love and Service are woven throughout all of our Three Legacies and memorialized in our Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and our Twelve Concepts for World Service.

There are no boundaries to the service opportunities all members have. We know that our job as individual members and as a Fellowship is to keep A.A. growing by continued reliance on our Three Legacies. I’m reminded of these words spoken by Bernard B. Smith, Chairman of the General Service Board, U.S. and Canada, 1951-1956:

*But this Third Legacy of Service has a string to it. And the string is that we are granted the use of this legacy for our lifetime upon the condition that we will not only look after it but increase its spiritual content for the generations that will follow us. Each succeeding generation, as it receives this legacy, must similarly protect it if they wish to employ it and gain life by it and pass it on to the next generation with enriched spiritual content.*

To be of service in any endeavor means self-sacrifice – this is so very true in A.A. It takes self-sacrifice to focus on our primary purpose – to carry the message into prisons and treatment centers; to answer phones when that suffering alcoholic takes the first courageous step toward recovery by calling A.A.; to spend those hours going through the Big Book with a newcomer; to endure the seemingly endless local and committee reports at service events; to meet with doctors, corrections professionals and media personnel in order to give them an accurate account of what A.A. does and does not do. Taken as a whole world wide, this is self-sacrifice on a grand scale.

Service is self-sacrifice through participation. Occasionally, I've heard someone say, "Oh, I didn't get much out that meeting." My response is "What did you give? Did you share your experience strength and hope? Did you help set up or take down the chairs at the meeting; make coffee; greet members at the door especially those fragile newcomers as they walked in? Were you generous with your contribution in the basket as it was passed around?" And what, I wonder, has this individual given in terms of service beyond the group?

In the essay on the First Tradition in our book, *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Bill writes, "Realization dawns that he is but a small part of a greater whole; that no personal sacrifice is too great for preservation of the Fellowship."

Today, I believe it is our collective responsibility to encourage members to become active in service in Alcoholics Anonymous in order to build strong home groups and to build strong relations and communications with other groups. All of us are the guardians of our Three Legacies – Recovery, Unity and Service. Out of strong home groups, come strong services and service structures for A.A. as whole. Whether the service is done by a single, local service committee or a General Service Office, the starting point is a strong "Home Group."

I was told that participation in service work would improve and strengthen my recovery, and I have found that to be so. I owe this program so very much. It has given me my life and a new way of living. I need to *pass it on* to ensure that the doors are open for those yet to come, as they were for me.

It is the breadth of all our services that A.A. members provide around the globe, that is responsible to all of us gathered here in Frankfurt today, sober and able to trudge the road of happy destiny together. We all have a special message to share with the newcomer—the tremendous growth and joy we have experienced in our individual sobriety due to our service involvement in our groups and A.A. as a whole.

So let us, you and I, take responsibility for A.A.'s future – to extend the hand of A.A. and carry the message through service. As Lois Wilson shared after Bill's death, "You are all now the co-founders of A.A." Pass it on.

## PRESENTATION OF THE 22ND WORLD SERVICE MEETING

THEME: ROTATION: THE HEARTBEAT OF AA

SASHA ANA Z, SLOVENIA WORLD SERVICE MEETING DELEGATE

Twenty-Second World Service Meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous held from October 21-25, 2012 at the Rye Town Hilton in Rye Brook, New York.

Ward E, chair of the General Service Board of the USA /Canada warmly welcomed 61 delegates, representatives of 34 countries and zones. Delegates were trying to reach the goal written in The World Service Meeting Statement of purpose who says that *"The primary purpose of WSM is the same as that of A.A. Activity – to carry the message to alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world he may be, whatever the language he speaks. The WSM seeks ways and means of accomplishing this goal by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength and hope of delegates who come together every two years from all parts of the world. It can also represent an expression of the group conscience worldwide."*

Ward E, chair of the General Service Board of the USA/Canadian his Welcoming Talk started the discussion on the theme of the 22<sup>nd</sup> WSM, *"Rotation: The Heartbeat of A.A."*. As many of you know, he was rotating in April this year and he share his view, his experiences and his fillings about his own rotation. He said *"I'm fine. I will have served nine years on the board, been privileged to meet some amazingly fabulous people. It's time and it's appropriate. Word appropriate, as he mentioned, describe perfectly his feelings about rotation. The spirit of rotation fosters the development of a humility that reminds us that the A.A. message is what is important, not the messenger."*

Tomasz, delegate from Poland delivered the keynote address and mentioned how rotation in service protects our community from these defects of character that have ruined our personal lives – ambition, exorbitant demands, desire to be on top, and thirst for power. That's why, he believes, Warranties are included in the Twelve Concepts. They guarantee a secure life for the individual alcoholic and for the whole Fellowship. In addition, the principle of rotation allows everyone to enjoy the privilege of service. He ended with beautiful comparison between AA and the forest from his grandfather's story. *"The forest lives forever. In forest, trees of all possible ages and sizes grow together. Some are dying, others still rising, those which fell, will be replaced by others. Therefore, when you feel that you too are like a tree, which grows completely united with all trees around you, younger and older than you will be truly happy. And you will feel really the same when you look at A.A. That god created it."*

Those honest sharing's and Presentations on the theme Rotation presented by Bolivar Z of Ecuador (How do we retain the experience of those who have served before us) and by Yasuo N of Japan (The importance of rotation) helped me to accept in my heart the main sense of the principle of rotation.

In next four days followed country highlights, Zonal Meeting Reports, workshops, presentations, Committee meetings and discussions, which continued outside meeting rooms with coffee. There is not necessary to mention full of emotions, joy and gratitude that we have each other.

We were listening interesting presentations from all over the world on different topics:

### **Young people in A.A**

About: Sponsoring Young people by Pravesh A (South Africa). What are we doing to attract and retain young people by John L (Australia) and How to deal with the legal/ethical issues of young people attending A.A. meetings

### **Internet and New Technologies**

Carlos L (Mexico) describe progress from the time when A.A. message transmitted by word of mouth from person- to- person until today when AA meeting is accessible almost from everywhere.

About Successful experience, concerning the use of the Internet for the Growth of A.A. in India shared Sunil G (India). Jan O (Sweden) in his presentation *The advantages and disadvantages of A.A. members joining social network sites*, agreed that the availability of A.A. 24/7 is very important among frequent internet users.

### **The Twelve Concepts**

We spoke in Workshop how the Concepts are not always very popular theme among us. But presentations on the theme were extremely useful. How Our Twelve Concepts are Tools of Communications present Jesus C from Peru. He mentioned: "When we actively providing services is supremely important to achieve proper communication in order to avoid creating conflicts and misunderstandings". About sensitive elements: Authority, responsibility and leadership spoke James (Belgium-Flemish- speaking), and Sheila (Great Britain) shared her experience on Spiritual Principles on the Twelve Concepts.

Conclusions of four standing WSM 's Committees:

### **Agenda**

The committee made no Changes. Recommendation theme for the Twenty-third World Service Meeting: "The Three Legacies: Vital for All Generations."

### **Literature/Publishing**

The committee accepted the A.A.W.S Report on the International Literature Fund.

The committee reviewed the service piece "Country-to-Country Sponsorship- Carrying the A.A. message Worldwide" to update information so that the service piece reflects the most current experience on sponsoring other countries and therefore suggested some changes.

Committee discussed the topics: Literature costs in countries, Auditing/review procedure for literature in Countries, Using cell phone apps for any A.A. purpose, A.A. literature online, Translation of A.A. literature.

### **Policy/Admissions/Finance**

The committee approved requests for participation at the 22<sup>nd</sup> WSM for the following countries: Chile, Ecuador, Slovenia and Hungary.

The Committee reviewed the budget of the 22<sup>nd</sup> WSM and discussed a letter from the general manager of the GSO in New York, explaining the growing financial respond of the General Service Board U.S./Canada for the WSM. The letter proposed that "the World Service Meeting be held every three or four years in New York City, or in an agreed upon international location." The committee recognized the vital importance of the WSM in carrying the A.A. message around the world and suggested that the Policy/Admissions/Finance Committee at the 23<sup>rd</sup> WSM offer recommendations to help make the WSM more self-supporting.

The committee encouraged GSO in New York to explore methods for committee members to share with each other during the time before the next WSM, following the example of the email forum of the European Service Meeting.

### **Working With Others**

- The committee shared on the following topics:
- Working with Others in Law Enforcement
- Social Networking/Web sites and Anonymity
- Production of Films- Use of members and/or doctors
- The following workshops took place at the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Service Meeting:
- Problems other than alcohol at A.A. meetings- how are groups dealing with this matter?
- A.A. groups departing from A.A. tradition- what can be done?
- How do we overcome apathy and generate enthusiasm in service work?

Among giving the Reports of Interim and Zonal Service Meetings I represent our Continent and gave the Report from the 16<sup>th</sup> European Service Meeting in Frankfurt 2011.

The next World Service Meeting will be held October 12-16, 2014 in Europe in Warsaw, Poland.

I can say that we were busy during the WSM, but working with marvellous people, from all over the world and with help of staff members from GSO New York was delightful.

Nevertheless, that was not the end of beautiful experience. Visit Stepping Stones-home of Bill and Lois was very touching for me. But hearty welcome at the General Service Office gave me cognition how privileged am I as a member of our amazing fellowship.

Higher Power gave us opportunity "to test the program in action". Thanks to Hurricane Sandy we stranded at the Hotel, two days without electricity. We had candle-light meetings, chats and singing on the lobby, we share our nervousness with each other, but we kept sense of humour. One out of us was Rogelio F, non-alcoholic trustee of the General Service Board, who comment: *"Only people with miraculous program of Alcoholics Anonymous can behave like that"*.

Thank You for your trust.



# COUNTRY REPORTS

## **AUSTRIA/SOUTH TYROL**

### **General Structure**

Austria and the German speaking part of Italy, South Tyrol are part of the German speaking AA (GSAA) in Europe. Austria /South Tyrol are one intergroup of actually 12 in GSAA. The Austrian AA is organized by the legal association, named "AA Interessensgemeinschaft", which is a non-profit organization. Common business meetings are held twice a year, in spring for 2 days and in autumn for 1 day. Austria/South Tyrol is divided into 6 regions with regular Chairmen Meetings twice to four times a year.

### **Number of Groups**

At the moment there are 172 AA-meetings in Austria/South Tyrol with approximately 1500 members. There are 8 English meetings and 1 Polish meeting in Vienna, as well as one English meeting in Salzburg.

### **Finance**

AA Austria/South Tyrol works on the principle of the "overflowing hat" as is used all over the world. After paying all self-supporting expenses like rent, literature, travelling expenses, etc, the groups give the leftovers of the hat collections to the regions, the regions give their leftovers to the intergroup and from there remaining leftovers go to GSO Germany. They use their "overflowing hat" to support the International Literature Funds in NYC. The GSO Germany also pays the fees for European and World delegates to the GSOs in York, GB and New York, USA.

Our actual financial situation seems to be stable, but it could always be better. In Austria we maintain our own GSO. Work is done on a voluntary basis, which is the reason we needn't worry about having a prudent reserve.

### **Services**

There are meetings in prisons, hospitals and detox-centres regularly. We also offer information meetings for young people in schools, together with members of Al-Anon and Alateens. The relationships with physicians, nursing staff, staff in prisons, teachers and officers in other organizations are quite good and productive. In our GSO in Vienna we have a daily telephone service. Lately we have to accept, that the telephone is less used by the "newcomers" compared to the increasing numbers of inquiries on internet.

This year we will also organize a workshop about the 12 concepts.

### **Literature**

AA Austria uses the literature of GSAA.

## Sponsoring of Other Countries

A number of groups have an "Ant's Box" or "beetle-hat" for collecting money for sponsorship in other countries. This sponsorship money goes directly to the International Literature Funds in NYC. We transfer the money once we reach €3000 in order to save money transfer fees. All the other sponsoring tasks are generally left to GSAA as a whole.

AA-Austria/South Tyrol has close relationships with the other intergroups in Germany and Italy. The relationships with AA in Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Slovakia are improving. Because of the visits to each other's meetings, conventions and celebrations our cooperation slowly increases.

## Public Relations

We place regular information about local AA-meetings, as well as articles about alcoholism and AA, AA-connections and information in some local magazines. Notice of meetings can be found on our internet. AA-Austria/South Tyrol has its own homepage: <http://www.anonyme-alkoholiker.at>. We also have a password protected web-forum for internal purposes only, such as communication, sharing of coming events, downloads of service material, protocols, the archives, etc. We have about 120 visitors per day to our homepage.

## Conventions/Celebrations

In 2012 the GSAA-Convention was held in Oldenburg/Germany, in 2013 it was in Regensburg /Germany ("Joy of life is our destination"), and next year 2014 it will take place in Augsburg/Germany ("Together we are powerful"). At present about 3000 AA and Al-Anon members attend these conventions. For 2015 the convention is planned in Salzburg/Austria and after some initial difficulties the organizing team seems to be getting on well.

This year we celebrate some important anniversaries:

50 years – AA in Salzburg	on May 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2013
40 years – AA and Al-Anon in Tyrol	on October 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2013
40 years – AA in South Tyrol	information meetings all year, radio
30 years – AA in Vorarlberg	on October 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2013

There are also different other smaller celebrations with information meetings and AA gatherings.

## "DACH"

The general GSAA magazine is called "DACH". "DACH" is the German word for "roof" – the common roof for AA in Germany, Switzerland and Austria and South Tyrol. The name is built of the initial letters of D for Deutschland (Germany), A for Austria, CH for Switzerland. From Austria/South Tyrol two friends work for the editorial team and many friends from Austria/South Tyrol send in their contributions to the Magazine being a meeting in print.

For the coming years we want to pass the message especially to the young and the old. We will try to reach out by attraction rather than promotion; we will also try to stay anonymous, but not invisible.

## **BELARUS**

### **Service Structure**

#### **Conference**

In 2003, the first conference service was held in Minsk. Since then, such conferences are held annually. The structure of the service was created for the simplest model that could work. Belarusian Service Board was elected. At the moment, only two AA Intergroup work in Grodno and Minsk. Resuscitated the region "West". Unfortunately, it's one in the AA service structure of Belarus.

#### **Belarusian General Service Board**

The Board of Trustees is composed of nine elected members: 3 General Services Trustees and 6 Trustees from Regions.

#### **Committees**

In General Service Board of Belarus , we have now: Finance Committee, the International Committee of the Conference Committee, the Committee on work with the correctional facility, the Literature Committee and the Committee on public information.

#### **Belarusian Service Centre**

Eight years ago the Third Conference on the service decided to register their service organization with the Ministry of Justice. Our General AA Commission held a lot of work in this direction, but we were refused. A year later, we repeated our attempt, and it was a success. At the moment we are trying to organize the work of the office of AA in Belarus. The consciousness of our group is beginning to develop in the right direction and finances, although small, are beginning to come at the expense of our service centre. Our office is open three times a week for 6 hours a day during the week so far. In the office we have 2 paid workers and 4 volunteers. Unfortunately the government has deprived this year our office AA subsidies for rent and we now have to pay 10 times as much. The Board of Trustees persistently looking for a way out of this situation. But for the while these attempts are futile.

#### **Literature**

In 2003, before the first conference on the service took a group of our volunteers apply to AAWS inc. financial assistance aimed at the creation and development of the service structure of AA in Belarus. Corporation to assist us in the form of free AA literature in Russian. All money raised from the sales literature is spent on the development of AA Service structure of the Belarusian AA. Since 2005, the Russian office of AA publishes books for Belarusian AA using the money coming from New York, AA. This made the GSO AA literature supply in Belarus much easier. Earlier, when the literature in Russian came from Austria, we had to pay high taxes. At the moment we are taking share in the publication of AA literature in conjunction with the Office of AA Russia. But we ask GSO U.S. and Canada to give us a license to publish and distribute literature in Russian AA on the territory of the Republic of Belarus. This may already be on the forces of AA's Office of Belarus.

We have also begun to translate the book "Alcoholics Anonymous," into the Belarusian language.

### **Finance**

At present, due to a multiple increase in the rent ratio donations and proceeds from the sale of literature have changed significantly, if earlier it was 40 and 60 percent, respectively, now 20 and 80. Donations from the AA group is not even enough for rent Office of AA.

### **Work with Professionals**

Our services work in collaboration with medical institutions of government and social services. Particular attention is paid to shelters where children of drinking parents are kept in temporary isolation. Meetings with drinking parents are also held there.

## BELGIUM - FLANDERS (DUTCH-SPEAKING)

### Structure

The basic elements of the structure are the A.A. members gathered in the 363 groups (an equivalent of 403 meetings every week) wide spread throughout the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium (Flanders).

The five provincial workgroups are the pivot points of the structure. Each province sends two delegates to the GSB. These delegates are expected to have at least four years sobriety and a good knowledge of the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, the Twelve Concepts and the structure of A.A. The workgroup provides opportunities for the groups to share their experiences and problems; and also functions as the “service hatch” between the groups of the province and national services, and vice versa.

### National Service Committees

**Admission Committee:** Responsible for the organization of the General Service Conference and also general oversight of the operations of the service committee within the Belgian Dutch - speaking A.A. (Flanders)

**Public Information:** Since “carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic” is always our main objective, it is evident that this service occupies an important place within our structure. The main task is to provide information about the A.A. recovery program to the general public and to people who are professionally involved with the problem of alcoholism. This committee tries to provide the needed information through the available media, open meetings, contacts in schools, hospitals, prisons, etc. To achieve results at this level, it is necessary that PI workers are well informed about A.A. Traditions. These matters are discussed on a regular basis.

**Distribution Centre:** Provides the groups with A.A. literature and is responsible for distribution of the monthly magazine “5 voor 12”.

**Finance Committee:** Keeps a look-out on the financial needs of our Fellowship. It is the place where money and spirituality need to be divided in the correct proportions. It successfully encourages groups to understand the need to support our General Service Office and our A.A. community as a whole. Our income comes mainly from group contributions, the sale of our literature, our yearly convention and other occasional events. According to financial reports in recent years, a substantial decrease has occurred in self-support. The service structures must therefore strengthen their efforts to make clear the spiritual meaning and importance of the Seventh Tradition.

**Literature Committee:** This committee is responsible for developing, updating and translating A.A. literature. As a result of good work done by our A.A. members, we are now able to offer a selection of 30 titles of A.A. Conference-approved literature. The most recent was the translation of *The Illustrated Twelve Traditions*. Translation in progress is “Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers” and “Experience, Strength and Hope”. We work together with the Netherlands to produce common literature. Printing is done by outside printers.

*Vijf voor Twaalf Magazine:* Publication of our magazine *5 voor 12* is handled by the managing editor, an A.A. member, who is assisted by the editorial board. The magazine publishes ten issues a year and has a circulation of some 2,100 copies.

*Loners:* The Loners Committee is a hard-working team of A.A. members. Members of the Loners Group receive A.A. meetings in print, and all current information every two months. At the moment we have 45 Loners, 40 Loner sponsors and four Loner groups.

### **The General Service Board**

The GSB supports and encourages everyone in carrying out the resolutions of the General Service Conference. The GSB ratifies the reports of the national service committees before decisions or advisory actions are implemented. The GSB does not have the right to make structural changes, but if a case is so urgent that it cannot wait till the next General Service Conference, the GSB has the right to make a decision on the issue (by 2/3 majority). These decisions are valid until the following General Service Conference, which might bring a different decision.

The board is composed of a chairman, who is a Class A (non-alcoholic) trustee; three Class A (non-alcoholic) trustees from the provinces; ten Class B (alcoholic) trustees; the secretary and seven national service representatives. Six other members participate in an advisory function: the secretary of the Aldinea-Bel Association, a GSO employee, two WSM and two ESM delegates.

### **The Aldinea-Bel Association**

The Aldinea-Bel Association, a registered and legally recognized non-profit association, acts as a corporate body to represent and manage the business of A.A. The composition of the General Meeting of the association is actually as follows: four Class A trustees, ten A.A. members (two delegates from each province). Two Class A trustees, one Class B (alcoholic) trustee and the secretary/treasurer (alcoholic) of Aldinea-Bel Association form the board of directors.

### **The General Service Office**

The GSO of Belgian Dutch-speaking A.A. is located in Antwerp (Berchem). The GSO coordinates the central offices of our Fellowship and is mainly an administrative unit providing services to the groups, the provincial workgroups and the Fellowship as a whole. There is one paid staff member (non-alcoholic). The office is open daily from 10:00 a.m. until 15:30 p.m. During off-hours a telephone service operates. On weekends, the national committees make use of the GSO office space to hold their meetings.

### **The General Service Conference**

Our 19th General Service Conference was held in 2013, the theme "Rotation, the heartbeat of AA". A printed final report of the conference goes to all groups. The 20th conference is scheduled for April 2015, the theme "Keep it simple". About 70 AA members take part in the conference. Observers from different neighbouring countries (The Netherlands, United Kingdom and French Speaking Belgium) attend our GSC.

## **The National Convention**

This yearly convention is a celebration day for all A.A. members, their families and friends, the spontaneous expression of happy sobriety and gratitude to A.A. Last year the Convention took place in the province of Antwerp, the theme "And then?" This year in May the convention was organised by the province of Limburg, the theme "A source of hope".

## **Participation**

We are invited and usually send delegates or observers to: the World Service Meeting, the European Service Meeting and the General Service Conferences of Great Britain, Germany, French-speaking Belgium and the Netherlands.

Reports are sent to all groups and are talked over by our General Service Board.

## **The Website : [www.aavlaanderen.org](http://www.aavlaanderen.org)**

We created an Internet workgroup examining the possibilities of the Internet for A.A in Flanders. The workgroup has redesigned the site which now displays times and venues of meetings and a list of A.A.-related events. Prices of A.A. literature are also listed. It is a well used, user friendly and well-known site. We plan to make full and effective use of the modern information and communication technology in order to better reach and help the still-suffering alcoholic.

## **Closing Remarks**

We are aware that the main purpose of any Conference is always to improve the structure of our Fellowship and the possibilities of helping the still-suffering and seeking alcoholic; to ensure that our important Traditions and voted resolutions are respected. However our most important aim is to stay sober so that we can help other alcoholics to obtain sobriety, always keeping in mind the Responsibility Declaration (Toronto 1965): "I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always be there. And for that: I am responsible."



## **CZECH REPUBLIC**

### **Groups and Membership**

In the Czech Republic are currently active 56 AA groups in the 40 cities. These figures are positively showing that we are growing. Membership counts approximately over 500 members.

Most of the groups are smaller, having only one meeting per week. Regretfully we are aware of some who do not follow our Traditions, either because they lack knowledge of them or willingness to.

Sponsorship is still rather rare than common, so are the regular Steps meetings. Another important fact is that almost all groups have only open meetings; actually they do not make the difference.

### **General Service Conference**

Our AA is not divided to usual land areas such as Region, District or even Intergroup. There are groups themselves and then only Board of trustees serving to our Fellowship in between General Service Conferences.

For several years this "Group conscience" has been held twice per year, firstly in January for a whole day and secondly during our annual Convention in June. This model was not ideal, so according to voices from groups, GSB have decided to gather the Conference only once in year, but for the whole weekend.

This format was applied for the first time this January and we have found it most sufficient. However, due to our still developing Service structure and process of gaining trust of autonomous AA groups, only half of them have sent their delegates. Nevertheless we were able to reach some important decisions and perform such actions as rotation of some Board members and individual Committee servants. We had enough time for all necessary discussions which is essential for our members to have better understanding of the importance of the Service structure itself.

### **The Board of Trustees**

Between Conferences authority and responsibility are vested in the Board of Trustees, which has 7 members usually from different parts of country when most of them are involved in the service Committees, such as the Literature Committee, the PI Committee etc. All our trusted servants in each area of service are AA members. There are no classes-A trustees, yet. The last GSC has established the length of this service position for 4 years.

### **GSO**

The General Service Office is unfortunately more virtual and consisting of spread and mostly independent servants rather than physical place representing this important tool of AA Service structure. Therefore we feel need to work on this Service body.

## **Service Handbook**

Another remaining issue is absence of AA Service Manual. The committee for this purpose has been created but work itself is much more challenging, it is not an option to only translate some foreign Handbook, we ought to fit these guidelines to our conditions and needs.

## **Finance**

Our national bank account is transparent; everyone can check all incomes and expenses on the bank's website. Our budget is composed of the following: about 40% are donations from group's seventh tradition and about 60% are from AA literature sales. Only a handful of AA groups are regularly contributing, though.

## **Literature**

Considering that we have more than 20 years of AA history, we are still lacking available AA literature in Czech. However the Literature committee is making some progress, this year we got through the process of getting a license on the translation of the book "As Bill sees it" and in following months we are about to publish it as the very first piece of AA literature completely self sufficiently. Another books and pamphlets should follow this example.

Upcoming issue will be new edition of Big book, though. Current translation is in many cases incorrect, pages are different from original version and we do not have recommended Czech stories.

## **Magazine**

Our magazine "Cesta" is published quarterly in circulation of 500 copies. Older issues are provided free for use in the treatment facilities and public places for spreading the message. This year is its fifth anniversary thus founding editors are going to rotate out of this Service and we are looking forward to have a new people taking over this great service and bringing some new ideas and enthusiasm.

## **Public Information**

Common knowledge about AA is still considerably low in our country, but among the professionals we are getting to be more known and accepted, proof of it is our better cooperation with Treatment facilities and doctors. We have had arrange several events for members of clergy, who gladly and with interest have attended them and it seems we can freely continue to do PI work in this area. AA was also invited to represent itself at multiple social services assemblies. And we are happy to have long term cooperation with few high schools where we are regularly throwing PI meetings. The age range of students is between 10 to 18, volunteer members share their experience, introducing themselves only as AA members. We provide such schools with pamphlets and magazines.

## **Internet**

One of our greatest achievements as a new Service structure is creating new AA website which is kept up to date and is much more user friendly and available than the old one.

Another helpful tool is our mailing-list functioning as so called non-stop AA meeting in form of e-mail contributions on given topics. Main point is to offer experience, strength and hope of AA to those who live out of reach of AA group (we still have a lot of blank areas). This mailing list has over 300 members from both Czech Republic and Slovakia, providing that way even broader range of shares.

### **Conventions etc.**

The program of our annual national Convention is getting richer, we have big book study, steps workshops, meditation meetings. Attendance is approximately 200 people.

### **Young People in AA**

Since establishing Board of Trustees our Fellowship is giving Service opportunities and trust also to our younger members ensuring this way healthy balance and encouragement.

Last year have been started first YP group in Prague, members of this group are active in both local and national Service.

At this year EURYPAA Convention held in Malta, were members representing Prague as one of the candidates for next year destination and convention itself has chosen it over London. So next year we will host this still growing European Young People in AA Conference, which we hope will help to encourage yet more and not only young people to be part of AA Fellowship and its Service.

### **Communications**

Some of our members are regular attendants of foreign Conventions and we are always inviting members from other countries to our Convention. We really appreciate continuing support from AA Great Britain ensuring our attendance at their General Service Conference and participation at the ESM. We also have good and solid relationships with friends in Poland and Slovakia.

## **DENMARK**

### **General**

The AA service structure in Denmark has been under revision the past years and it is still in progress and was revised again at our Conference in 2013. It has been important to improve the democratic process from groups to conference, and the years to come will show if we have succeeded. We are until now, very satisfied with the process as well as the result. The service structure is as a very important democratic tool developing AA in Denmark.

### **Meetings and Groups**

The number of AA Meetings in whole Denmark is (August 2013), 436 meetings at our meeting list, which is a few less number of groups than we reported in 2011. This is a little bit surprising, since treatment facilities recommend patients to go to AA meetings – and there have, caused by the financial crisis, been a decline in numbers of treatment facilities in Denmark. We regard this among others as a sign of AA being in good health in Denmark.

We have 9 Meetings held in English in 9 places in three different cities. 6 meetings are in Icelandic language, in two different cities. 3 meetings are in Greenlandic language, in two different cities, one meeting is in Polish language. There are two Danish speaking meetings in Spain and one in Thailand. The number of meetings in foreign language has increased since 2009.

There are 2 meetings on the internet in Danish language. There are no distinguishing between meetings and groups.

### **Regions**

AA Denmark is divided into 6 regions.

The groups elect Group Service Representatives (GSR) to meet at Region Service Meetings. The regions nominate one trustee each to the General Service Board (GSB). Service Conference 2011 recommended two trustees from each region to GSB in the future. The regions also appoint a number of delegates to the General Service Conference, regulated by the number of groups in the Region.

All Regions have created a Service Manual. The Regions build up their service structure like the one for AA National. Furthermore the Regions have strengthened the public information service throughout the country. They cooperate through the national public information committee. Several Regions have succeeded in finding a non-alcoholic friend to serve locally.

Still it seems in some regions a little hard to have new people to step up. In others there seem to be quite a good representation from the groups.

## **General Service Board (GSB)**

The GSB consists of 17 members. In addition to the 6 trustees nominated by the Regions, and approved by the General Service Conference, the GSB comprises a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Treasurer and a Secretary, who are all, elected by the General Service Conference for a period of four years. All members are obligated to meet or send a deputy. Currently there are no non-alcoholic members in the GSB. Service Conference 2011 recommended GSB to work with this issue.

One time the year a representative for each of the permanent committees also attends the board meetings. The members can call a meeting.

The board meets every three months at our General Service Office in Copenhagen.

The Board meetings have been divided into two parts. In the first part all GSB member and the representatives from standing committees are present and all matters concerning the committees are discussed. Second part is for GSB members only and delegates to international conferences, though matters concerning a certain committee or function will have representatives present while the matter is dealt with.

## **General Service Conference**

The Danish General Service Conference is held each year in April. The 2013 conference had participants, of 88 whom 64 were voting delegates. Guests from Finland, Norway and Greenland were present. The past 7 years, the conference has taken place in the same location on the island Funen in middle of Denmark, from Saturday morning till Sunday afternoon.

The regional delegates are elected for period of four successive years without option to be re-elected at any time. The regional delegates have two third of the votes on the conference.

Other members of the conference are: One representative from each of the standing committees, members of the General Service Board, International delegates (ESM, WSM and Nordic) Chairman of the conference, represents from the national service office.

Beside our usually four working committees at our conference we have workshops too.

Since the year of 2010 we have had a conference committee consisting of a chairman and a vice-chairman elected at the former year conference, chairmen and secretaries from the 4 committees for the conference to come and a member of GSB. They are responsible for planning and evaluating conferences.

Since 2011 General Service Conferences do have a theme – This year the theme was: Action leading to changes!

Like the British we manage to write and distribute the conference report before the Conference is over.

## **General Service Office**

The current General Service Office (GSO) situated in Copenhagen was opened in May 1999. The office is open every Monday from 4.30 am to 6.00 am.

Literature sales, production and AA Data do their work from the GSO. Many Committees and the Copenhagen Region held their meeting at our GSO. There are no paid workers in GSO.

## **Working Committees and Service Units**

A large number of AA-members are doing voluntary work in the following working committees and service units. Actually all work are done only by non-paid AA-members. Chairmen are appointed by the committees and approved by GSB. The rotation period is four years.

The standing committees are:

Literature Translation and narration of audiobooks

Box 334 (membership magazine)

Telephone Service and E-mail help line

Finance

Service Manual and Service Structure Manual

National public information

IT

Conference

Experience committee

The Service Units are:

Literature Sales

Production (Photocopying)

AA Data (updating meeting lists, conference administration, home page etc.)

## **Finance**

Group contributions are made to the treasurers of the 6 regions. The regions pay contributions to the treasurer of the General Service Board. The group contributions have increased the last years, but still they do not cover all of the GSO expenses. The shortfall is covered by the proceeds of our literature sale. The last year we have registered a fall in the turnover from literature sales. This is probably caused due to the fall in number of treatment facilities in Denmark whom therefore buy less literature. In 2010 we raised a significant amount by a special collect in the groups.

Approximately 60% of our expenses are covered by group contributions and 40% from surplus from literature sales. All committees are requested to make up a budget for the year.

## **Literature**

Most basic AA literature, brochures, and pamphlets are translated into Danish and sold from our General Service Office. We have decided to permanently make most pamphlets free of charge. All books in Danish have now been recorded. The CD's are sold along with the written literature.

The book "AA comes of age" is just published in Danish.

TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS was re translated to Danish and published in 2012.

BOX334 is our nationwide magazine, which have been circulated since the beginning of 1990'ies.

### **Public relations**

Denmark is in the process of strengthening the total information effort. As many activities as possible are to be carried through at the regional level, but in order to co-ordinate the effort and make it more efficient, the national Committee is comprised of one member from each of the six regions.

Since many years we have had a nationwide telephone service with a combination of advisers taking calls at their home and advisers at the General Service Office. The telephone service has one telephone number covering all of Denmark, and the calls are routed to the member closest to the caller or to one of the members at the GSO. The service is available 7 days a week from 8 a.m. to midnight.

We have established an Internet answering service based on our experiences from the telephone service. This E – mail help line is a success. Everyone gets an answer within 24 hours. We have made a manual of frequently asked questions – which is a big help for the advisers answering the mails.

### **Internet**

Several years ago AA Denmark established a web site: [www.anonyme-alkoholikere.dk](http://www.anonyme-alkoholikere.dk) , which is still being improved. It is possible to order literature on the web site. All regions also have their own web sites hosted by AA Denmark.

A standing committee (IT) is working on policies for using the electronic Medias. Only conventions and meetings officially held by AA Denmark can be present in the online calendar.

There are two e-mail meetings in our meeting list. The Big Book is available online.

All meeting agendas and minutes from GSB are published on the website.

### **Relations with Other Countries**

A Nordic convention is held once a year. The convention alternates between Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. During the convention, a delegate from each country attends a meeting to share experience.

We also seek to attend General Service Conferences in Norway Sweden, Finland, and usually two, the last years one observer have been sent to the British Service Conference. We have participated in the European Service Meeting for several years and as of 2002 year we also participate in the World Service Meeting.

On recommendation from AA Iceland we have started to cooperate with AA Groups in Greenland. Every year we invite observers from Greenland to our conference.

We are still following the progress in Greenland closely and assist with all experience we can. We offer our help but listen humbly to follow what they think is the most pressing area to cope with.

### **Final Remarks**

AA Denmark has come of age and our structure has been functioning well. But we still feel that a decisive factor for a wholesome and constant development of our Fellowship in Denmark is to seek inspiration from and comparing notes with other countries having achieved greater experience than us.



## FINLAND

Finnish AA celebrated their 65th anniversary in April.

### Structure and Service

The structure is based on the original Conference idea as Bill had proposed. The guidelines are from US/Canada Manual, Area level. The Finnish AA Service is made up of 20 delegates proposed by the areal meetings of AA groups. The Annual Great Meeting of the groups confirms the final composition of the AA service and committees. The committees are Policy, Admission, Literature, International affairs, Public information, Institutions and Carrying the message.

The Finnish AA publishing Inc. consists of 6 trustees, who serve 3 yrs terms. They are selected at AGM of the groups. The main tasks of the corporation are the responsibility of AA office and staff, legal affairs contracts, finance, PR, publishing actions such as copyrights and printing of literature. GSO office has 2 employees and 1 part time.

The economy has been stable during the last years.

### Bulletin and Internet

We have 2 monthly bulletins, Ratkaisu/Grapevine and Tiedotuksia/Information. The first one includes writings of AA members and the other one monthly economical review and information of events. Both are subscribed over 2000 copies monthly. Printed material is sold approx. for 200,000€.

Our web pages have been modified as well as the group directory. The web address is [www.aa.fi](http://www.aa.fi) and e-mail address is [aa@aa.fi](mailto:aa@aa.fi) Contacts can be made English or Swedish

### Group Activities/Carrying the Message

We have over 700 groups, 50 these in institutions and 50 abroad. The groups are mainly Finnish speaking, partly Swedish and few English. Groups organize 4 national Conventions yearly. Representatives from media and institutions are invited to get information of AA.

The AGM of Finnish AA groups takes place every year during the Spring Convention

Telephone Answering Network covers the whole country plus circa 70 local group phones.

### The Finnish AA and Other Countries

The AGM of the groups elects the WSDs who serve 2 years as a first term and 2 years as a second term delegate. Both delegates take part in WS and ES meetings. In national level both have a chair in committees and in Trustees meetings without right to vote.

The Groups organize trip to different AA Conventions e.g. Estonia and Sweden.

**Conclusion:** The theme of this year is "Live and let live" it reminds us to carry the message to alcoholics who still suffer.

## FRANCE

AA France will celebrate its 53 year of existence in November 2013.

We count 595 groups in France and in overseas regions (Polynesia, Reunion Island, the Caribbean, Guyane, and New Caledonia): 540 French speaking groups, 46 English speaking groups, 3 polish speaking groups and 6 groups in prison areas.

The service structure is organized in 6 region committees, 50 representatives of those regions take part of the annual general services conference. The General service council is made off 13 administrators (from which 4 non alcoholics, 3 general services, 5 territorials, 1 universal with the position of international representative), one European representative and 8 offices (health, justice, hotline and internet, media, literature and archives, godparenthood french speaking Africa, structure and general politics, finances).

The movement employs 3 paid employees to enable its BSG working. Service exchanges have been formalized within the European French-speaking communities. (French speaking Belgium, France, French and Italian-speaking Swiss).

The bridges with the brotherhood of the Al-Anon Alateen family groups are numerous in the public information and hotlines. The relations based on the 12 AA steps with the other brotherhoods are sought and promoted.

Our main concerns are the relative stagnation of the numbers of groups and the question of our members' age (average around 50 years old).

### **National Health Office**

From today on, France counts about 320 actions in the Health environment: Groups (36), Units (165), Visites and Hotline (120). An IT tool enables the real-time registering of actions and directly into the regions. This will soon permit to edit and monitor our presence in the health institutions on our public website.

We are actively collaborating with the health professionals to make ourselves better known and therefore to facilitate the forwarding of the patients to our groups. We also develop the work relations with other support movements, on the national level as well as on the international level. Finally, we have facilitated the participation of volunteer members on 2 research studies about « the evolution of interpersonal values et the maintenance of the abstinence in time within the support movements » and « Look into the association of the Alcoholics Anonymous ». Our present main work topics are: « the alcohol and the youth »; « the alcohol and the seniors » as well as « the addiction-studies connection team in hospitals ».

## **Justice Office**

The actions in the Justice area cover essentially 2 domains: the closed environment (prison centres) and the open environment (the path of the citizen before or after the imprisonment). The penitentiary law from 2009 enables to take over the opposition between closed and open environment. The necessity to limit the imprisonment enables to fight against recurrence and facilitates insertion and re-insertion of the subject. The ministry of justice and the penitentiary administration are involving more and more often actors from the civil society, from which the AA, to be active in the in the re-insertion and in the alternative to imprisonment.

The Justice office brings its help to « servants » to set groups openings, units and information meetings in closed and open environments. The office is very aware in reminding that the interventions into justice are a teamwork. Therefore it is important to attend to create strong team before engaging in an action. Single actions are strongly disadvised.

Declared and listed actions: 47 penitentiary institutions, 6 groups, 30 units, 12 information meetings, 5 regular action in open environment, 2 courts, 1 re-insertion centre, 1 road accident prevention. Intervention in the National Penitentiary Administration School: meeting between national association partners and students from the ENAP.

## **National Hotline and Web Office**

The goal of the office is to watch over the unity of the hotline and of the reception activities on a national level. The hotlines are held and managed locally by inter-groups, districts or regions. The office brings its support, tools and suggestions.

Since 2004, AA France has opened a national hotline number with a unique tariff (0 820 32 68 83). Our wish is to have the globality of the regions and servants on the national territory participate in this service. This distribution enables not only to propose a shared service but also to obtain a better response coverage.

Since 2007, the regions are in charge of organizing the night hotline time slot (21h-09h<sup>0</sup>). The 22 French regions are all participating in it. So, we have highly improved our response capacity (100 % of the night/year are today covered).

The present and future work consists in extending this service to the following daily hotline time slot (09h-21h). For the moment 7 regions on 22 participate to this dayshift for an average of 6 %/month (63 hours from the 378 hours that the month counts).

The institutional website [www.alcooliques-anonymes.fr](http://www.alcooliques-anonymes.fr) has been entirely renewed last year and receives lots of visits. The movement can be contacted trough the website for contact requests coming outside as well as from inside. It keeps on developing thanks to the group suggestions and because the url stands on most of our communications.

## **Literature Office**

Following the justice and health committees requests, various works will be added to the Literature catalogue. We have to update the leaflet « AA for the youth » taking the remarks from our Belgium friends into account.

Study of a potential insertion to the Literature directory, on condition of approval during another conference, of the existing slogan from the English literature « This too shall pass! »

### **SPG Office**

The SPG office is focused on the Service Organizations (non-profit organization). We will encourage the groups, the districts and the regions to organize in Service Organizations. We notice the stagnation of AA in France since many years, even if we register encouraging evolvement in certain regions and an improvement of our visibility and image. However there are some regions where AA is in decline.

## **GERMANY**

### **General Structure**

A.A. Germany is a part of the unified structure of A.A.-German-speaking countries (GSAA).

The ten Intergroups of Germany are bound together by the legal entity of the "AA-Interest-Association e.V." which is registered Association for public welfare according to the German Civil Law. Switzerland and Austria have their own intergroup service offices corresponding to their own national laws.

The General Service Office (GSO) and thereby the official seat of GSAA is located in Dingolfing/Bavaria since the end of November 2007. The Intergroups are based on a different number of Regional Groups. The Regional Service Meetings are held 4-13 and the Intergroup Service Meetings 3-4 times a year.

### **Number of Groups**

At the moment there are around 2.600 groups registered at the GSO in Dingolfing. In Germany there are about 2.500. At around 100 of them are located at correctional facilities. A.A.-contact-offices exist in about 40 larger cities in Germany.

**In 2013 we had round about 30 online groups. They are working like real groups and provide their own services. We understand that the electronic media is an important instrument for reaching new friends.**

### **General Service Conference**

The General Service Conference (GSC) of the GSAA is composed of 72 delegates coming from the 12 Intergroups, the 30 members of the General Service Board (GSB), the ESM- and WSM delegates and guests who had been invited by the Conference Team.

On the 32. GSC was dedicated to the motto "Courage to change things". Motto of the 33. GSC "I am responsible".

### **General Service Board**

According to the Service Manual the General Service Board consists of up to 30 members. The Speaker of the Board, the Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons of the "AA-Interest-Association e.V." the General Manager and the Secretary of the GSO, up to four Class-A-Trustees beside the Chairperson of the Association who always needs to be a non-alcoholic trustee, 12 Class-B-Trustees elected by the 12 Intergroups, four Referees for Finances, Public Information, Literature, Internet/New Media, the Editor of the AA-D.A.C.H-Magazine and the Speaker of the editorial staff, the European- and World-Service-Meeting delegates and the Chairperson of the GSC-Team.

## **Conventions**

In 2013 the GSAA Convention took place at Regensburg in Germany. It was a very harmonious, loving and successful event. About 2700 AA members attended plus about 900 Alanon and Alateens.

The next Convention in 2014 will take place in Augsburg.

## **Finance**

AA in Germany works with the principle of the "overflowing hat" as usual. That means that all the money which is not necessary for the groups for their self-support, like rent, literature, etc. is transferred to the region, the leftovers go to the intergroup, from there the still extras go to GSO Germany, they are supposed to pass donations on to GSO in York and New York.

The financial situation of AA in Germany seems to be stable but still there are some groups that don't pass the money on.

## **Services**

There are meetings in prisons and hospitals. The number of information meetings for young people in schools, for apprentices and professionals has grown recently; mostly we work together with members of Al-Anon and Alateen who also share their experiences. The relationship between AA and physicians, nursing staff, staff in prisons, teachers and officers of other organizations is good. If problems arise they usually can be solved immediately.

## **Literature**

The situation of monthly magazine "A.A.-D.A.C.H" is better than the last years. The magazine is more coloured, with better pictures. More members write for it about their experiences in A.A.

The quarterly communication paper "AA-Intern-422" is more than before used as a forum of critical appreciating remarks on the different controversial matters within the GSAA; this is a good tool for open discussions.

## **Internet**

The Internet is a very popular way of approaching A.S. The Website of GSAA [www.anonyme-aholiker.de](http://www.anonyme-aholiker.de) receives more and more people and is regularly updated.

The Web sites are well developed and under steady control and improvement. The web sites provide information about meeting places and online-meetings, A.A. events, regions, literature, the Fellowship as a whole, contact links and, of course, a link to Al-Anon und Alateen.

## **GREAT BRITAIN**

### **Groups, Intergroups and Regional Assemblies**

At the end of April 2013 there were a total of 4277 AA Groups registered with Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain), 496 of these being English-speaking Groups in the Continental European Region. Great Britain consists of the countries of England, Scotland and Wales, within which there were a total of 3781 AA Groups.

Each AA Group is represented at its local Intergroup by a Group Service Representative. Intergroups in turn are represented at their Regional Assemblies by Region Delegates. Intergroups and Regions are geographically arranged, and there are 119 Intergroups and 16 Regional Assemblies. Of the Regional Assemblies, 9 are in England, 5 are in Scotland, 1 is in Wales and 1 is in the Continental European Region.

Intergroups and Regions have liaison officers who serve in the following disciplines: Public Information, Employment, Prisons, Health, Probation/Criminal Justice Services, Telephones, Literature, Share or Roundabout magazine, Archives, Electronic Communications, and Armed Services. This liaison activity will be reported upon below.

### **General Service Conference**

The Forty-Eighth General Service Conference was held in April this year, the theme being 'The Gift of Service'. The Conference comprised 95 delegates from the 16 Regions, 21 members of the General Service Board, Conference Chair (Erik A from Continental European Region), Share Editor, General Secretary, 5 General Service Office staff, and 1 from the Northern Service Office. Also in attendance were 5 Observers from Belgium (Flemish-speaking), Czech Republic, Poland, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia.

The main content of the Conference consisted of reports from the Chair and various Trustees, and the 6 Conference Committees that addressed and made recommendations on selected Questions for Conference that originated from all parts of the Fellowship. Committee responses were then voted upon by the full Conference on the Sunday morning. A two-thirds majority in favour makes the recommendation binding upon the General Service Board to take action, whilst a simple majority is a recommendation.

### **General Service Office (GSO)**

GSO in York provides the links between Groups, Intergroups, Regions, the General Service Board and the General Service Conference, while acting as the European Service Centre. GSO responds to enquiries worldwide, co-operating with service structures in other countries for mutual benefit. The staff of GSO and the two satellite offices (Northern in Glasgow, and Southern in London) provide services that maintain these communication links.

## **General Service Board**

The General Service Board consists of a Trustee from each of the 16 Regions, and also Trustees occupying the positions of Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer who, along with the General Secretary, form the Executive Committee. The General Secretary is also General Secretary of the General Service Office in York and our Northern and Southern Service Offices. Currently there are also 4 Non-Alcoholic Trustees, who are able to relate to the general public without having concerns of personal anonymity. Four full Board Meetings are held each a year, plus an annual workshop in July when Board Members reflect upon their personal effectiveness, their relationship with the Board, and the Board's effectiveness in serving the Fellowship of Great Britain as a whole.

Each Trustee has specific responsibilities and work within the disciplines that are listed under Groups, Intergroups and Regions above and, as previously stated, will be reported on below.

## **Sponsorship**

The General Secretary and Board Chair attended the World Service Meeting in October 2012. Sponsorship of the Sub-Sahara African Service Meetings in South Africa continues, shared equally with USA/Canada. The General Secretary and Vice Chair attended the meeting in June 2013. We also provided the accommodation for observers to our Conference.

## **Finance**

Our finances are currently in a stable position. Both Gift Aid and Personal Contributions have increased. The annual Gratitude week continues to take place in the week following Founders' Day (10 June). During Gratitude Week all AA members are invited to contribute to the 'Gratitude Pot' in addition to their usual contributions. Our commitment to financial prudence continues and the Subcommittees continue to hold conference calls instead of some of their face-to-face meetings where this is feasible; they also keep their memberships under review. All of this allows us to continue to carry the AA message to the wider community, and to commission periodic projects, the latest being the production in British Sign Language (BSL) of the Big Book, and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions on DVD, for the benefit of people with profound hearing loss whose first language is BSL.

## **AA Service News, Share and Roundabout**

AASN is our quarterly service magazine which provides a forum for sharing good practice and experience. Articles are welcomed from all levels within the Fellowship. Sub-committees publish their Terms of Reference in the magazine and the outcomes of committee discussions at Conference appear in the summer edition. All registered groups receive 3 copies.

Share and Roundabout are our 'meeting between meetings' magazines which contain personal shares and useful information for the AA member. Roundabout is the Scottish magazine and Share is for members south of the border.



## **Archives**

An official Archives Road Show has been sanctioned by the Board. This will be taken to conventions and other AA events. There is an extensive archives centre at GSO but storage of new archival material is now becoming a problem. Additional members of the Archives Subcommittee are required to continue to take forward this important area of work.

## **Armed Services**

This being the newest of the service disciplines it is nevertheless gradually increasing its coverage of the organizations to which it is carrying the AA message. In addition to having made contact with many military bases, contact has also been made with several organizations that are concerned with armed forces personnel including: Military Veterans, Live at Ease, National Veterans Mental Health Network, Forces Future Charitable Foundation, Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA), and Combat Stress.

## **Electronic Communications**

Early this year the AA (GB) website was completely redesigned with a new service provider. It has a completely new interface with a new menu format with multiple links to make for easier navigation. There is an area for service disciplines to place their material for the benefit of AA members working within those disciplines. The meetings finder is now linked to mapping software, thereby making meetings much easier to locate, especially from mobile devices. A mobile version of the website is currently being developed.

The Online Responder Service (ORS) is an email-based service which enables people who think that they may have a drinking problem to enter into an email conversation with an Online responder. The ultimate purpose of the ORS is to encourage the person to call the national AA telephone number so that they will have the opportunity to be taken to an AA meeting if they so wish. It is available on the website: [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

## **Employment**

The Fellowship continues to be represented at Conferences and Exhibitions. Employment Liaison Officers work with local employers, trade unions, the Trade Union Congress, the Federation of Small Businesses, pharmaceutical companies, employment agencies, the Institute of Directors, and the Chamber of Commerce.

## **Health**

In addition to forming links with local health-related facilities and holding AA meetings in various treatment centres, links are currently being formed with Public Health England and other recovery champions. There is a growing movement known as Mutual Aid Facilitation which encourages people with drug and alcohol problems to attend meetings of AA and NA. Our Fellowship therefore needs to continue to welcome people from these sources and help them to stay with us.

## **Literature**

The last two Conferences have seen the approval of the production of two new handbooks: Service Handbook and Structure Handbook. Production is now almost complete and they will be distributed free of charge to each AA group in the near future. The handbooks are in a convenient and attractive A5 format and completely replace the previous more cumbersome material.

An updated literature brochure will also be distributed to all groups free of charge in the near future. All literature is available to order through the online shop on the website.

## **National Conventions**

We have four National Conventions in GB consisting of the Northern, Southern, Scottish and Welsh Convention. Each convention has a Sponsoring Body made up of the surrounding Regions. Each Region has the responsibility of electing an equal number of members who together form the committee which is directly responsible to the Regions through an agreed Terms of Reference. Next year, the Northern National Convention which is held in Blackpool, will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## **Prisons**

AA (GB) holds meetings in prisons in England, Scotland and Wales through the work of Region and Intergroup Liaison officers working with local members. We also have a Prison Postal Service. GSO holds a database of members willing to correspond with prisoners. The Board Trustee with responsibility for Prisons liaises with the National Offender Management Service to discuss issues around access to prisons.

## **Probation/Criminal Justice Services**

Throughout the country there are various liaison arrangements between Intergroups and Probation Officers (in England and Wales) and Criminal Justice Social Workers (in Scotland). AA members working in this discipline will make themselves available to meet offenders who are being supervised in the community and offer to take them to an AA meeting. A proof-of-attendance system also operates where this is expected when the offender is subject to an Alcohol Treatment Requirement. The Board Trustee with responsibility for this discipline liaises with the National Offender Management Service to discuss relevant issues, especially in the light of changes to the Probation Service in England and Wales that are currently taking place.

## **Public Information (PI)**

The focus in recent years has been on encouraging individual group members to get involved in PI work. We are now calling the month of November 'Alcoholics Anonymous Awareness Month' during which PI activity is intensified: posters are displayed throughout the country, and libraries and other public places display copies of AA books, leaflet and posters, as well as hosting open AA meetings to which a wide range of professional people are invited.

The main national events are our annual presentations at the three seats of government in Great Britain: Westminster in London, Holyrood in Scotland and the Welsh Assembly. These events raise our profile with professional bodies including Members of Parliament, medical experts, police, members of the prison and probation services and other professionals. We explain what we do and what we don't do and how we can co-operate with the health, judicial, social services and other organisations.

## **Telephones**

The main source of enquiry for the person who asks about receiving help with their drinking problem is our national helpline (0845 769 755), which is answered locally through a divert system by British Telecom (BT). However, during recent years, the number of first-time enquiries has decreased. One reason for this may be because of the increased visibility of AA through the website, which also facilitates access to meetings. Another reason may be because of our use of a premium-rate telephone number. BT is currently changing its range of telephone number types and their associated tariffs. A final decision will be made, regarding the most appropriate type of number for the helpline, when the BT changes become definitive.

## **ICELAND**

### **Structure**

There are over 250 Icelandic AA meetings in Iceland every week and the population of the nation is about 300 thousand.

All alcoholics are welcome to any Icelandic AA meeting whatever language they speak.

There are several English speaking meetings in Reykjavik every week. There are also currently Russian, Polish and Deutsch meetings, once a week.

The number of A.A. members in Iceland has been steadily increasing for many years and we notice that more young people are joining our organization. We can now easily see two or three generations at an A.A.-meeting.

Voluntary AA members take meetings to hospitals, treatment facilities and prisons, mainly through Intergroups, and sometimes AA-groups take on the task and rotate members serving there.

### **Internet**

Our A.A. members have started to use the internet for communications and meetings and now there are two Skype AA-meetings on the internet, mainly used by Icelanders abroad.

There is great discussion about the anonymity on the internet as a media, especially concerning Facebook.

### **Intergroups**

We have been encouraging AA-members and groups to create Intergroups, in the countryside. There are four acting Intergroups in Iceland, in the south, north, south-west and in the Reykjavik area. Some run a volunteers-operated 24-hour emergency telephone service. All take on the task of communicating with treatment facilities, hospitals and schools for informing about A.A.

### **General Service Board**

The National Service Board (NSB) is made up of twelve trustees of whom nine are A.A. members and three are non-alcoholics. The NSB has regular meetings in the wintertime.

The board runs the National Service Office for A.A. in Iceland, and organizes the Annual National Service Meeting which is held in May each year. Furthermore, the board is responsible for an Open Celebration Meeting on Good Friday every year to commemorate the arrival of A.A. in Iceland on that day in 1954. The participation at that meeting is around 2400 AA-members and friends of A.A.

## **General Service Office**

The National Service Office is based in Reykjavik and has a staff of one A.A. member as full-timer. The office is open all working days from 11am to 4pm, and takes care of all regular and routine work for A.A in Iceland, similar to other GSO's

## **Finances**

Contributions from A.A. groups usually cover the cost to 100% of running the National Service Office and other costs that the NSB undertakes, such as sending delegates to WSM and ESM.

We try to retain one year's expenditure. Some years the costs are 90% financed by the A.A. groups contributions and 10% by the Publishing Committee.

## **Literature – new or reworked**

Most of the A.A. Conference-approved books and 12 A.A. brochures have been translated and published in Icelandic. We also have the Big Book and 12 & 12 on CD's. Currently we are working on a material concerning A.A. for prison inmates; Memo to an inmate, and the pamphlets Twelve concepts illustrated and Problems other than alcohol are inconsideration. The book Dr. Bob and the Good old-timers has been translated, and will be published soon. Editing and reviewing the old translation of the Big Book is about to start. A committee has been set up, over viewing the translation and seeking comments from our members.

## **Conference & Conventions**

The Service Manual for A.A. in Iceland is still evolving through our Conference's votes. The annual National Service Conference is in May each year, and it is similar to other such conferences in other countries.

## **Contact Information and Websites**

The National AA office in Iceland is at Tjarnagata 20, open on working days from 11-12 and 13-16.

Tel +354 551 2010 and our E-mail: [aa@aa.is](mailto:aa@aa.is)

[www.aa.is](http://www.aa.is)

## **IRELAND**

In 1946 Connor F. an Irish Emigrant and a recovering Alcoholic himself came back to Ireland on holiday. He immediately recognized the need for Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland, and encouraged by his wife, became determined to start an AA group before his return to the USA. In his hotel one morning while having breakfast he struck up a conversation with a lady named Eva Jennings. She gave him directions to St. Patricks Psychiatric Hospital. There he met Dr Moore, who had heard of AA. Dr Moore had read about AA in the Readers Digest. Dr Moore had a patient at the time who was a chronic alcoholic. The patients name was Richard P. Dr Moore said that if Connor could help Richard then he would believe in the programme of AA 100%.

Under escort Richard made his journey to Connors Hotel. Both men immediately recognized their common problem. This meeting was acknowledged as the first AA meeting in Ireland. Soon after this Richard was released from hospital. They gathered four to five other problem drinkers and met in the home of one of these men. Soon afterwards they held the first public AA meeting in Ireland.

The Irish Country Women's Association offered them space in the Country Shop in Dublin. AA meetings continued to take place there until 1978 when the shop closed.

### **Public Information**

AA in Ireland has always been very active in Public Information, getting the message of AA out to the Communities. Regular PI meetings are held throughout the country. Requests from outside organizations, for example schools etc. are always met with enthusiasm. Throughout the year many Areas took on board C.P.C. and took it out to the community. A bulleted presentation was given. When this was over the people present shared their own experience with one another and also enjoyed some light refreshments.

Our improved website is now up and running and the response to this is great. A new DVD has been produced for PI purposes. Its running time is about 15 minutes. The title of this DVD is The Road Back. It can be purchased through our General Service Office.

### **Finance**

There has been a major decline in our top table contributions throughout the Fellowship in Ireland. This is mainly as a result of the current recession. Information has been sent to all groups in the Fellowship informing them of the implications this can have on our General Service Office. The good news is that this year contributions seem to be stabilising.

Since the mid-nineties groups have been contributing to the International Literature Fund and the European Service Fund. As this financial trend continues, we have not been able to send contributions to either of these funds. Alas, this saddens many members as we are all aware of the immense work this fund has done and continues to do.

## **AA and Electronic Communications**

AA in Ireland has set up a new website with a return email address. The purpose of this is to bring AA in Ireland in to the 21st century. Our young members in the Fellowship will also benefit from it.

We as a Fellowship must be forever mindful of our Traditions and how easy they can be broken. An important and intensive discussion was held in New York at the 2012 World Service Meeting. This was in relation to Electronic Communications and how easily it can be abused. We as members of AA have to be responsible.

Before we finish, we have to say that currently the Fellowship in Ireland is going through some turbulent times. Our reconvened Conference in September has been postponed. We are aware that our second Tradition reminds us that there is "But One Ultimate Authority - A loving God as he may express himself in our Group Conscience". With His help and guidance the Fellowship of AA will solve any problems.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the ESM committee for inviting us to the 17th ESM meeting and we are looking forward to being part of carrying the AA message and listening to how other countries are staying sober.

## ITALY

### General Structure

A.A. Italy was founded in 1972 and counts in 2013 an estimated number of 460 Groups, which is quite the same as the last years: 60% of the groups are located in the North, 30% in the Centre, and a 10% in the South.

A.A. in Italy is composed of 19 areas, which correspond to our geographical regions. Each Area can elect a maximum of 3 delegates to the Conference. Each Area includes from 3 to 10 zones (districts) which may include about 5 - 15 Groups each.

Currently the GSB is composed of twelve members, four of which are the macro-regions trustees (2 for the North, 1 for the Centre and 2 for the South), five trustees are responsible for the committees: Internal, External, Literature, Administrative and International; one is the National Secretary and one is NON-alcoholic trustee (Class A).

### The Internal Committee

This Committee is in charge of the organisation of the Conference, the National Convention, the Convention of the South, the service seminars, the meetings of the GSB with the Area Coordinators.

It carries out the strategies recommended by the Board to motivate the growth of the Groups, through the Program and the strengthening of the structures.

It takes care of the completeness and correctness of the information contained in the archives of AA.

It intends to ensure the widest connection between all the services of the Association through an internal information/communication system that makes use of all available means, including the latest and newest information technologies.

The "Charter of the Conference" had never been approved by the AA Italy. Therefore, the General Service Conference has instructed the Committee to create a work group to develop this document and compose a preliminary text to be discussed and voted on 2014 Conference.

As from the 2014 Conference the Committees of the Conference will be reintroduced.

Another work group is dealing with the review of the service of the Nomination Committee.



## **The External Committee and P.I.**

According to the A.A. Italy Service Manual, the main functions of the External Committee are:

- Help to create the best conditions to carry the Message, increasing the visibility of AA at national and local level and for this purpose maintain and develop good relations with the press, radio and TV
- Ensure that A.A. will come up with a univocal and correct image throughout the national territory
- Develop relationships and partnerships with institutions and organizations working in the field of alcoholism and social health care
- Encourage the areas and groups to get to know and to consult the Committee
- Support the creation of External committees in the areas
- Cooperate with the media, inviting them at press conferences in occasion of special PI events

## **The Literature Committee**

During 2013 it worked out several propositions and initiatives in order to extend the diffusion of literature in Groups.

In fact it published pamphlets on Promises and Warranties.

In the last year sales of AA Literature in Italy have increased, despite some relevant factors as the economic crisis, the lower number of new members, and the lack of new AA publications. At the National Convention in September the sales went very well.

The Rimini Convention maintained the annual meeting with Workers in charge of Literature on Group, Area or District level, as well as anyone interested in AA Literature. It was an occasion to emphasize the importance of each group having a Worker in charge of Literature.

For several years the Literature Committee organizes the "Day of Literature" and the theme chosen for 2013 was "Working with others".

Given the fact that the groups are asking for spoken literature registered on CD for blind and visually impaired friends, the Committee started working on this.

## **Finance**

During 2012 and 2013 many efforts have been made by the GSB to minimize costs but, despite everything, the current economic situation deserves serious attention by all.

We must continue with substantial cuts in order to ensure sound economic management.

## **Prisons**

For many years members A.A. are sponsoring groups within prisons. Unfortunately A.A. is present only in a few prisons. For the past two years during the National Convention a meeting was planned between members who are or have been serving in prison with several AA that might consider the possibility of starting this kind of work or simply are interested in learning about such activity.

Some workers share their experience giving indications and suggestions on how to start the service, where to go, what to do and what absolutely not to do.

In 2013, service in the Ucciardone, the prison of Palermo, was started anew. In the north, some alcoholics from the Verona area informed us of their intention to open shortly a group in prison.

## **Foreign Workers**

We notice an increasing request for literature in foreign languages (especially English – Spanish - Portuguese - Romanian) to give to foreign workers who arrive at A.A. groups. The Committees and International Literature, in collaboration with each other take care of finding and distributing the required books.

The International Committee has created a list of names of foreign people who live in Italy and agree to give name and phone number to the foreigners applying for aid, this way they have a first reference of someone who speaks their own language.

## **Internet and Web Site**

Currently the website is being restyled, in order to respond to renewed needs of the Association, to communicate its activity both internally and externally in a more efficient and punctual way.

## **Insieme (Together) in A.A.**

In the whole AA Italy, the Italian magazine distributes 1,800 copies.

The Committee is composed of 5 persons and some external collaborators.

With the current Committee, the magazine looks different, for some more modern, more readable. Large space is given to personal shares of other countries' AA magazines.

The new lay out has brought about both critics and appreciation, but it certainly has stimulated the curiosity. We are currently designing a website that will be interactive and will have a mailing list.

## Conclusions

The National Convention, held in Rimini in September 2013 had as topic "Spirituality in the Group: Faith - Trust - Delegation ".

At the Convention were also held some meetings in English and German.

The theme of the next Conference in April 2014 will be

Communication in AA:

Communicating for my recovery (1st Legacy)

Communicate to stay united (2nd Legacy)

Communication in service (3rd Legacy)."

## LATVIA

This is a significant year to the AA fellowship in Latvia for we are celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this November, and you are most welcome to visit us.

### Structure

It was exciting to discover that during these 2 years (since the last ESM) the number of active AA groups has increased – we now have approximately 60 groups. There were 40 groups in year 2011. The number of participants in each group varies – starting from 2-3 people in the newly formed groups (typically in smaller towns) up to more than 40 in bigger groups. There are mostly Latvian and Russian, as well as one English speaking AA group in Latvia.

The necessity for intergroups has increased over the past two years. It seems to be merely a question of time before these groups can be formed. Due to sponsorship and work of the 12<sup>th</sup> Step, more and more people wish to join the structure and service of AA in Latvia. The number of groups that wish to apply and participate in our GSC has increased, and if it continues to grow like this, the Conference will not be able to contain all of them. Therefore, we are in grave need of regional structure.

### General Service Conference, GSO and GSB

Since 2010, we hold a General Service Conference once a year for two days in April. This two-day type of Conference has helped develop the fellowship within the Fellowship, as well as its structure. All groups are welcome to participate in the Conference, and, as one of our members of a smaller group said: 'I feel I have not been left behind.' The Conference also helps in spreading the message and educating members of groups regarding the Traditions, Concepts and Principles of AA.

There are several Committees participating in the service of our General Service Board – Finance, Events (it is responsible for organizing the annual AA Summer Convention in August, and organizing the Anniversary celebration in November), Literary, Committees that cooperate with Professional Community and Society, as well as our monthly magazine 'Vīnoga' editorial board. The GSO coordinates the rotation of people serving with the help-line phone (24/7) and our website [www.aa.org.lv](http://www.aa.org.lv). The chairpersons of Committees serve on the basis of rotation and the service sponsorship has begun to appear.

Last year, for the first time in the history of AA Fellowship in Latvia, a professional (non-alcoholic A class trustee): a retired narcologist, has been elected as a member of GSB.

### Finances

In spite of the crisis that still affects our country; the group contributions have not decreased. Due to the GSC being held for two days, the opportunity to explain the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition better has been given. Even more profit is brought in by the different AA events throughout the year.

Target-contributions for Board-organized events are received from different groups more often now. Our financial situation can be characterized as solid. Our main expenses comprise professional book-keeping, rent for the main office, help-line phone, translating, editing and publishing AA literature. Since year 2001 we have our own bank account. Major income is from literature sales, contributions and common events.

### **Literature**

The work of the Literary Committee has been very successful. We are currently translating and editing the book 'Dr. Bob and the Good Old-timers'. We have published four new pamphlets 'The Twelve Concepts for World Service', 'Is AA for me?', 'AA for the Woman', 'This is AA: An Introduction to the AA Recovery Program' in Latvian. We are in need of literature for youth and literature in Russian. AA in Latvia is planning on re-publishing the 'Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions' to correct mistakes in previous translation so that it corresponds with English original.

### **Other Services**

In Latvia, groups convene in prisons (3 groups), hospitals (detox centres), and people from rehabs also come to AA meetings. Individual members of AA carry the message of Twelve Steps to people in rehabs and detox centres. We have started cooperating with workers of Latvian Social Service, respecting the Traditions. We have re-established our web-site [www.aa.org.lv](http://www.aa.org.lv) so that it is new-comer oriented. It is now more useful to people who seek help.

In cooperation with several groups, Midsummer's Night event, New Year's Eve celebrating, as well as the Annual Summer Boat-trip is organized. These events are important for newcomers sobriety, as the surrounding festivities and usage of alcohol during the national festivities is very great. Thus the cooperation among AA groups is strengthened and the way to intergroups is opened.

### **Relation with other Countries**

We have established a very good relationship with the Polish AA Fellowship. Each year two of our AA members go to Poland to observe the Polish GSC. Every two years we go to participate in the ESM and our members also take part in the WSC. This was the first year our AA members have participated in Service to Deprived of Liberty Conference in Poland.

Our Fellowship is visited by brothers and sisters from Lithuania, Estonia, Russia, Belorussia, Finland, Poland, The UK, the USA and other countries. In return, our members are invited to other events in these countries as well. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the other AA Fellowships for their help and guidance.

## Conclusion

Things we still need to work on

- Spreading the message among youth about AA
- Publishing literature for youth and Russian speakers
- Finding A-class friends to collaborate with
- Establish intergroups

Things we have developed well

- The sponsorship movement
- The translation of new literature
- Maintaining the financial situation stable
- However, the most important thing is to spread the message to people who still suffer from alcoholism
- Thanks to God, the Fellowship of AA in Latvia keeps developing in all its aspects

## **LITHUANIA**

### **Structure**

The first AA meeting was held in Lithuania in June, 1988. We celebrated our 25th anniversary this year. At this time there are 121 AA groups in total operating in Lithuania and 13 Lithuanian speaking groups abroad: 3 groups in England, 5 groups in Ireland, 1 group in Sweden and 1 in the USA. There are 7 Russian speaking groups in Lithuania and 1 – English speaking. We also have 6 AA groups in prisons. Lithuania has about 2,500 AA members. 300 meetings take place every week. Lithuania is divided into 7 regions each having its own service structure. Our General Service Board consists of 7 trustees, one from each region, the chairman of the Board of Trustees and our office manager. All of them have voting rights.

In the spring of 2009 Lithuanian Alcoholics Anonymous Fellowship as a legal unit was reregistered into Lithuanian Alcoholics Anonymous Service Board of Trustees (LAAT Patikėtinių Taryba).

### **Service**

The first new-format Conference was held in the fall of 2008. Conference meets once a year and is made up of our Board of Trustees, 5 delegates from each region, our ESM and WSM delegates plus the servant of the Service Office. All of them have voting rights. The Conference work was divided into Committees (Finance, Internal, Public Information and Literature/Publishing). They prepared recommendations for the Board of Trustees sharing the weight of responsibility enabling to work out decisions brought up by groups a year ago. During these Conferences we vote on issues relative to Lithuanian AA as a whole. We also choose topics of discussion based on most often received questions to General Service Office. Recent topics have been how to prevent the watering down of our Programs principles. Based on feedback during the following Conference most groups report a positive effect from suggestions shared during the Service Conference. The Big Book study is widely spread all over the country.

Our General Service Office has moved from our capital Vilnius in 2009 and is now located in a small town called Birštonas. We maintain a General Service Office with two paid employees - our office manager and our accountant.

### **Finance**

There are no significant changes in this sector. 1/3 of all the expenditure necessary for keeping the office up comes from sale of the books. The rest of the funds come from the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition. The groups' donations to the regions increased obviously due to stronger activities of the groups. The new format conference took a very important place in the Service Structure.

### **Literature**

In the spring of 2009 the Board of Trustees revived publishing of the publication "Aušra" which was stopped in 2003. Today we have this publication being published every quarter.

You can find AA members share their service experience with all the AAs in Lithuania in "Aušra". At the moment its circulation is increased by 500 additional copies.

We have 7 books and 14 brochures translated into Lithuanian. Some of our early translations have been retranslated or edited to improve their quality. Our Big Book is also available on CD for the visually impaired. Service Reference Book was published in 2008.

I'm happy to announce that one more book - the "AA Comes of Age" - is now translated.

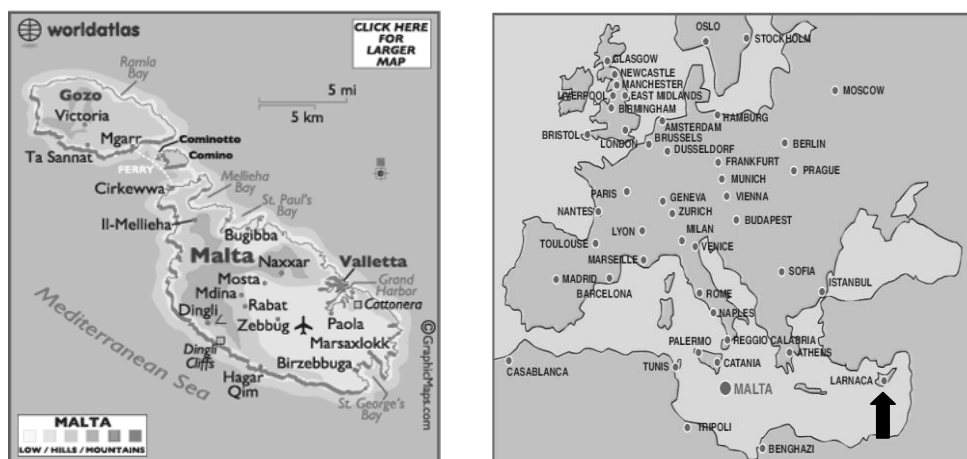
At the moment we have an acknowledgement from New York to translate and to carry out the book - "Twelve\_Concepts for World Service" and 3 brochures "Problems other than alcohol", "Young people and A.A.", "The A.A. Members-Medications and other drugs" .



## MALTA

### Malta - Background

The independent Republic of Malta lies in the Mediterranean Sea just South of Italy and North of Libya. With an area of only 316 square Kilometres and a population of about 450,000, it is one of the smallest and most densely populated countries in the world. To put it in perspective, Germany is about 1000 times larger than Malta but only has a population 180 times the size. Maltese (a Mediterranean/Arabic mix), and English are both official languages. The latter is widely used and understood.



The country is made up of several islands, but only the main island of Malta itself and its smaller sister island of Gozo are significantly populated, the latter having 30,000 residents. Tourism is a major industry and numbers swell during the tourist season bringing with it many overseas AA members seeking meetings. There is significant English speaking ex-pat population too, mostly people retiring from other EU countries. Currently, because of its proximity to the African coast, the country faces a significant (relative to its size) influx of refugees and asylum seekers from North Africa whom it tries to support.

Maltese society is strongly Catholic, and very family centred. As everywhere, poverty and wealth exist, but generally society is reasonably affluent with good health, transport and education services. The IMF classes it as an "Advanced Economy". Unemployment stands at 6% of the available workforce. Alcoholic beverages are readily available from shops, bars, hotels and restaurants etc., and wine and beer would be perceived as fairly cheap compared with North Europe.

### AA General Structure in Malta

AA Groups are established at 8 key locations across Malta. In total there are 6 Maltese language Groups and 12 English language Groups (including 2 bi-lingual) and meetings are available every day of the week. These figures include a new Group which was recently formed in the town of Marsaxlokk to meet a perceived demand in that area and a well established Group in Gozo. Another new Group has also just been established with a focus on Young People, to encourage them to participate in service within AA rather than be passive members.

All Groups have members who act as secretary and treasurer, and all nominate an observer to attend meetings of the main General Service Committee (GSC) in the capital, Valletta. The GSC meets every 6 weeks and is the focus for all Malta AA activities, with 5 members who are elected every 2 years. The last 2 years have shown the GSC to be a robust and successful body able to provide the necessary support to the Groups and to alcoholics seeking help, and ensuring Malta contributes to the wider international AA stage.

### **Finance**

Every Group receives donations from its members and manages its own finances autonomously, but reports its financial status to the central GSC. Groups use this money to pay their running costs and, in particular, ensuring their creditors are paid in a timely manner. The Groups support the GSC by passing surplus funds to the GSC which uses this money to pay for its Headquarter Services such as the development and purchase of literature, publicity, web site management and telecommunications. The GSC maintains a strict and open accounting system.

### **Literature**

Successful efforts are being made at GSC level to regularize the purchase of AA books and other literature, and to ensure requests for literature by the Groups are met. To this end, a well controlled library is now being maintained at the HQ premises in Valletta by an appointed librarian. The "Big Book" is now printed in Maltese and a Maltese translation of the "12 and 12" has been completed, but awaits approval.

### **Publicity, Promotion and Public Service**

In 2012 AA Malta produced an alcoholism awareness poster with links to AA which was distributed widely across the islands. For example, on the smaller island of Gozo over 90 Doctors, Dentists, Police Stations, Council Offices and Pharmacies were circulated with a request to display the poster. This has led to a small number of enquiries to AA which is considered a successful return even if it leads to only one alcoholic achieving long term sobriety.

Following our rather disappointed report on the subject at the ESM 2011, AA Malta was delighted to be invited to contribute to a series of programmes on local radio which were strategically broadcast during the 2012 Christmas period. We were also invited to address medical students at Malta University. Anonymity was maintained throughout. These efforts were all received very positively, and we are hopeful for long term benefits in improving the local population's and the local medical profession's awareness of AA and its objectives.

We were also invited to talk to both the inmates and their family members at the local prison facilities. This too was well received by a population which has a more than normal proportion of people with alcohol and drug related problems.

A 2 page spread in one of the Maltese national newspapers gave excellent insight into the plight of the Alcoholic and the challenges they face in achieving long-term sobriety. It featured an interview with an anonymous AA member with side columns describing the workings of AA and its activities in Malta, as well as publicity for the 2013 EURYPAA Convention held in Malta in June 2013. We hope this type of publicity will help counter the taboo surrounding alcoholism.

### **Communications**

We continue to offer a 24/7 emergency help line with someone assigned to carry the mobile phone at all times. The number appears in the local newspapers. Those seeking help or meetings may also contact the phone numbers given on our website. This is now well established and is regularly used, especially by visitors to Malta and Gozo who are seeking local meetings. We are conscious of the need to ensure the website is properly maintained, but volunteers for this work are scarce, not because of the commitment but because of a "fear" of the IT involved (our member's average age probably puts them outside the IT generation!!). We could benefit from the experience of other countries in this area.

### **International Activities**

Malta AA continues to be very active in the international arena. In the autumns of 2011 and 2012 we hosted the Malta International Conventions which were attended by 250 and 180 people respectively. These proved inspirational to attendees. The 8<sup>th</sup> Malta International Convention is scheduled for 1-3 November this year.

Perhaps the most significant event in the last 2 years was the EURYPAA Convention last June which was attended by over 350 young AA members plus a large number of other supporters. This was considered to be very successful.

Malta has advantages as an international convention venue arising from good air links, good weather, many hotels, and very reasonably priced accommodation and living costs. But arranging and running these conferences requires a considerable effort by the organizers in Malta and overseas. They are to be thanked for their service to the organisation.

### **And Finally!!**

We consider Malta has a mature AA organization and tradition (we celebrated our 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year). But, the need for humility and unity is recognized and these are a vital focus in our continuing efforts to ensure our message is passed to everyone who is in need or is interested. As recognized by the founders of AA some 70 years ago, this service creates a "win-win" situation; we help others but in doing so help our own sobriety!

We must thank the personnel at York for the prompt help they so freely give as well as all the other numerous people in New York and around the world who help maintain AA as an international organization which continues successfully to help so many alcoholics.

## **NETHERLANDS**

### **General**

AA Netherlands, celebrating its 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, has a present number of groups of 218 with membership of approximately 3750 people.

There are also 42 English-speaking groups and in Amsterdam there is a Polish and a Spanish speaking group.

The English-speaking groups affiliate themselves with York. There is a good interaction between the various communities.

### **Structure**

AA in Holland is based, per our traditions, on delegated authority. We are divided into 6 regions. There are five delegates per region eligible for the General Service Conference and one for the General Service Board. In even numbered years there is a two-day General Service Conference and in the odd numbered years there is a one-day conference.

The General Service Board meets every three months to carry out the decisions of the General Service Conference. The Board is composed of selected members of each region: preferably the regional chairmen and coordinators of various committees and services.

The General Secretary of the General Service Office is responsible for daily operations with ultimate responsibility lying with the General Service Board. The General Service Office is administered according to the Dutch Civil law and social traditions. AA in the Netherlands is comprised of three foundations under which belong The Big Book, "The Boei" (equivalent to the Grapevine) and all the AA groups.

The efficient functioning of various service functions has improved in comparison with the last few years. E.g. the Adcom (preparing the agenda for the General Service Conference) better filled than in the last few years and can do its job in relative calmness.

### **Committees and other services**

#### **Finance**

The Finance Committee reviews the proposed budgets of all commissions, sub-commissions and services. It further advises the General Service Board on all financial matters. It is composed of one delegate per region. The general situation of AA in the Netherlands is not very satisfying. The last few years were closed with a deficit, endangering the sensible reserve of AA the Netherlands.

Nevertheless it was decided to spend the equivalent of 1000 Us Dollars each year of ESM, WSM meetings.

## **Literature**

The Literature Committee is responsible for translating, developing and updating of all AA literature in book and pamphlets form. It insures conformity with AA's three legacies. Due to circumstance the Literature Committee only consisted of one person in the beginning of 2010, but fortunately new members applied and the Literature Committee could restart with three members.

## **Contacts with the Dutch speaking part of Belgium**

A new translation and edition of The Big Book is being worked on and finalised.  
A new translation of "Sober Life" is being carried out.

For 2013 the above projects have been carried out with success and are ongoing.

## **Committee for Public Information**

The National Committee for Public Information oversees all requests for assistance and information from outside AA organizations. It offers an information package in kit-form for public media.

There is a positive atmosphere developing between AA and a growing number of professional organizations, which are offering help in case of alcohol abuse. Many of those organizations have based their programs on the AA's 12-steps.

The Committee for Public Information have organised in the past few years special reflection days, which were very successful and very well visited.

As for the information in penitentiary institutions an agreement with an organisation called Exodus (special re-integration programme) is about to become in vigor. The VPI (Information in Penitentiary Institutions) has become an integral part of the COI.

## **De Boei**

Despite various efforts unfortunately the Dutch version of the "Grapevine" did not come to live again until now.

Since April 2009 "De Boei" had to stop its activities. Our General Service Office is now editing a mail leaflet each 3 months the P.O. Box 2633 for its members, which is transmitted per mail to all groups.

## **AA Telephone Helpline**

There is a telephone number available on a twenty-four hours basis.  
A new telephone number for the AA helpline has become in vigor as from June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

## **AA and the Internet**

The website conforms to all guidelines published by the AA World Services in New York. It includes a complete overview for anyone seeking help with alcohol related problems. Relevant information is provided for each AA-group.

A summary of the AA program is provided and links to the National Committee for Public Information is available. AA literature can be ordered via the website.

There is an updated agenda for all known coming events.

Links are provided for Al-Anon, Alateen, English-speaking AA in the Netherlands as well as to local AA-websites in the Netherlands.

An on-line AA helpline (AIA) was admitted as a separate AA group.

## **Policy Committee**

We are very happy with the fact that this committee is active again as from this year. One of its first activities is to elaborate a profile for a non-alcoholic Administrator A.

## **Contacts with Other Countries**

There is a close, traditional contact between Dutch AA and Dutch-speaking Belgian AA. This includes an exchange of representations on each country's General Service Conference. English-speaking AA flourishes in the Netherlands, including its own yearly convention.

The National Dutch-AA convention is held each year around the beginning of October, this year to be held in a one-day event, to cut down expenses.

AA in the Netherlands strives to send two delegates to the ESM and WSM, whilst working out with the Flemish AA a combined delegation.

## NORWAY

### Short Description of the Norwegian AA and its Structure

Norway has about 5 million inhabitants, approx. 2000 AA-members and 160 groups. This makes for great distances between AA-groups in some areas, and from time to time difficulties in getting the service structure to work properly.

The country is divided into 5 regions; each region consists of three or more districts, with a total of 20. Each district elects one, in some cases two or three district representatives. These representatives are the link between the groups and the national AA, which consists of our GSO and our GSB with 5 standing committees. They are also delegates to our yearly Service Conference, where they represent a two thirds majority of the votes.

Our GSB consists of 6 alcoholics elected from the regions, and 3 non-alcoholics elected by the GSB.

The Norwegian GSO has one part-time employee (70%) and several volunteers.

Our national magazine is called Boks 201, and is published every second month, circulation 800.

Delegates to our Service Conference are district representatives, GSB-members, Employees at the GSO and the editor of Boks 205. We also invite as observers our friends from Denmark, Finland and Sweden, and participate at their national Conferences as well.

Financially, we have a current budget of NOK 2,0 mill. (\$ 345 000). Our income is half 7<sup>th</sup>. Tradition self-support, and half from sales.

We have a good working relationship with Denmark, Finland and Sweden, and meet twice a year share experiences and learn from each other. We also participate in the World Service Meeting.

### Current Main Topics

The main internal focus the last years, has been to improve the understanding of Service and Unity, both in the groups, in our districts and on a national level, and thereby motivate more members to commit to service. We have held a number of seminars for the groups.

In addition we have started a seminar for new delegates and deputy-delegates, to improve the understanding of our structure and the importance of our Service Conference. The goals are to increase the interest of doing service, and improve the confidence of our servants.

We also have an internal education program for GSB-members, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, to shorten the integration process.

To improve the understanding of the fellowship as a whole, we try to inform better what is happening on a national level. We also encourage local seminars, and help organizing them.

We intensified the activities above three years ago. On this year's Conference, we presented a draft for a strategic plan. We have now an inquiry among the members, and hope to amend and finalize the plan with full support of the membership on next year's Conference. Through the plan, we hope to achieve a better coordinated effort in our information work, and better cooperation in all levels of service.

To make AA better known, it is important that we work efficiently and direct our efforts to areas where we as a fellowship can benefit the most. Here, the help of our non-alcoholic members is very important.

### **Communication and Literature**

Technically, we are well equipped both to inform and communicate. Our national service-phone, which is operated by local groups one month at the time, is working satisfactorily. It is also popular service to carry out.

Our internet-capabilities have been recently updated, and are also working well.

We have translated most of the relevant, approved literature. Most of the literature has been recently updated and given a modern lay-out. We have audio-editions of The Big Book and 12 + 12.

We are discussing how to best inform and make our literature known by way of internet. We are also discussing how, and to what extent we will provide downloads from the internet, and how we can utilize the Internet better internally. Our delegates now mainly get their information through email.

### **Miscellaneous**

We are continuously working to improve on our efficiency, and especially to improve the knowledge and understanding of our service principles, the twelve concepts, throughout the service structure. We have dedicated members and a positive atmosphere of cooperation.

The local information work is done by groups and Inter-groups, with assistance of our GSO and national PI-committee.



## **POLAND**

### **Structure**

The main purpose of the whole structure of the Fellowship of AA in Poland is the same, as that of each group AA in the world – to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholics wherever they could be and whoever they might be. As of the year 2013 the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Poland consists of over 2300 groups, about 160 of which hold their meetings in correctional facilities, 70 Intergroups and 14 Regions. Each Intergroup can choose the Region they wish to join. Also, there is a significant number of Polish language groups spread across the Europe. They form 14<sup>th</sup> Region that is now accepted by our Conference and are part of our Service structure.

### **General Service Conference**

Each Region sends four delegates to the General Service Conference (the delegates rotate after three years of service). The General Manager of BSK (General Service Office), editor-in-chief of Zdroj bulletin, the employees of the office involved in working with the Committees are also voting members of the General Service Conference. In addition, two delegates from the Conference of Polish-speaking Groups in Europe participate in the GSC.

The Conference takes place annually in a place decided by the delegates previous year. The delegates work in four standing committees: Agenda, Finance, Literature as well as Public Information and Cooperation with Others. For the last five years, at our GSC we, together with our AA friends from Great Britain, have been organizing special international panels for mainly, but not limited to, the post-Soviet Union countries.

### **General Service Board**

The Board of Trustees is currently made up of 13 alcoholics, 2 National Delegates and four non-alcoholic members (Class-A trustees).

The procedure of electing the members to the Board is that each Region elects two candidates and sends them to the Board's Nominating Committee. The Board's Nominating Committee chooses the proper candidates and recommends them to the General Service Conference.

The main purpose of service of the Trustees is to inspire all service members in the AA Fellowship in Poland to improve the methods of carrying the AA message and protect the spiritual values, which result from the AA Traditions.

### **Service**

Service starts at the group level. Groups have a chairperson, a treasurer, often a literature representative, a GSR, and sometimes a welcoming committee. Each group has its GSR who serves in the Intergroup. The Regional Conference elects from among its members four delegates to the General Service Conference. The Intergroup's responsibilities include carrying the AA message in the area of the groups which form the Intergroup, most often to hospitals, correctional and treatment facilities.

The Regions run contact offices, telephone and on-line service; they provide public information. We have a very good relationship especially with the Correctional Facilities Management; there is no prison in Poland without an A.A. Group; we organize workshops for Correctional Facilities officers; we share our experience in this matter with other countries.

Once a year, each time in a different town, a National convention and 'Zdroj' bulletin festival takes place.

We are preparing the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Fellowship, which will be celebrated in 2014 in Warsaw.

As a result of last year's World Service Meeting in NY, Poland has been blessed with being chosen a host of the next WSM that will happen in Warsaw in 2014. GSO in NY have already started preparations.

We maintain contacts with the Fellowship in other countries and with Polish-speaking groups all over Europe – we invite observers from other countries to our Conference - and they are not only the closest neighbours. With the financial support of the Great Britain Fellowship we are inviting other countries, especially post-Soviet Union ones, to our conferences, where there is an opportunity to share experience, strength and hope regarding building the structure and publishing the literature. Our goal is to encourage those countries to try to participate in ESM and WSM. We also get invited to Conferences abroad by other countries, like the UK, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia, Latvia etc.

Recently we have taken an effort to translate the 12 Concepts (short and long form) in order to fit it more closely to our local realities. These have been already approved by AAWS in New York. Thanks to many workshops across the country we have already noticed more interest and awareness of our Fellowship of what these mean to the service structure in Poland.

Next project taken on by Board of Trustees is to finalize the Service Manual. It is in final stages of preparation and is being consulted throughout the entire fellowship. It will be presented during our upcoming Conference in November this year for our delegates' approval. We hope to have it published in the nearest future.

A significant effort was put into Public Information area. Our Board of Trustees working with GSO in Poland as well as with our dedicated ex-trustees have launched several actions to increase awareness of the "outside world" about AA. We went to the Polish Parliament, released a TV spot, organized meetings with clergy, press, correctional facilities and treatment officials on the National and Provincial level.

In an effort to improve our efficiency in carrying the message and in order to gain more experience from the ex-trustees and Regional Chairpersons for the last three years we have been organizing special workshops for those who want to share their experience with current service reps. In addition we have organized similar workshop for Intergroup Chairpersons on a national level. These events seem to be very beneficial as they help us understanding our recent history with all its difficulties and successes so the tradition is carried on.

Based on our close relationship with AA in Great Britain and our participation in their Conference our Fellowship we continue a new approach to choosing topics for our yearly Conference. We are collecting suggestions from the entire AA in Poland through GSRs, delegates and trustees. Board of Trustees and Agenda Committee, upon reviewing these, offer recommendations and suggestions, and select most vital and important questions to the Committees' Workshops for the General Service Conference. The idea behind it is that all the service levels are cooperating and that we bring our principle of the Groups having the ultimate authority and responsibility in our structure to live.

## Finance

The Fellowship of AA in Poland is self-supporting thanks to contributions (60-20-10-10 plan), Birthday Plan and the sales of AA literature. The Groups are suggested to send 40% of their basket money to the Intergroup; the Intergroups send a quarter of their money to the Region, and a quarter to the General Service Office. It covers more or less 35 % of the costs of the activities of the General Service Office in Poland. The remaining 65% of the office activities is covered from the income from the literature sales. That ratio still seems to be not sufficient and there are lots of efforts to change the Groups' awareness in this matter.

## Literature

BSK AA publishes General Service Conference approved AA literature. So far there have been published: *Alcoholics Anonymous, Living Sober, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, Came to Believe, As Bill Sees It, Daily Reflections, Pass It On, and Dr. Bob And The Good Old-timers*. Twenty five pamphlets have also been published. Our bulletin, *Zdrój*, with a circulation of about 3200 copies, and a service bulletin 'Skrytka 2/4/3', with a circulation of 1600 copies, are published bi-monthly. A special bulletin for professionals "Wiesci z AA" is distributed every quarter of a year via e-mail. For few years we have had a full translation of the reports from the European Service Meeting and the World Service Meeting.

We are currently preparing third edition of the Big Book and are starting to collect personal stories of recovery based on Twelve Steps from AA members in Poland. As part of this effort we have taken on a project of reviewing the current Big Book translation and have formed a committee including native English speaker. We now see that this might take several years due to number of necessary changes.

We are still waiting for Grapevine to approve our translation and grant us a licence for the book "The Language of The Heart".

Last year, based on recommendation and approval from the previous Conference, we have published "History of AA in Poland" volume 1. It covers not only first years of the Fellowship in our country following first group's establishment in 1974, but also how we got there since the AA idea came to Poland in 1957 and ends in 1997. The book was written by one of our AA fellows but with great contribution from the Old Timers and Friends of AA.

## Internet & Helpline

Our GSO maintains an official AA website at the domain [www.aa.org.pl](http://www.aa.org.pl). We observe a constantly increasing number of visitors; we also maintain on-line contact and an information service provided by our volunteers. In October 2005 we launched a special on-line service for people seeking information on AA – we call it “On-line Duty”. There are efforts to increase the applications of the Internet in carrying the AA message and in improving the internal communication within the Fellowship.

There are many tools available, like Trustees’ Forum and Chat etc. Regional information services have been set up, which contain meetings lists and other important information about the Regions.

There are much more than 20,000 visits on the site per month! In the General Service Office there was installed a communication server via which individual Regions send information to groups and Intergroups. The Groups Database is available via the website and WAP/GPRS protocol on mobile phones and PDAs. There is also an Internet shop, where members can subscribe to AA bulletins and buy AA literature.

Poland has its own country-wide infoline 0 801 03 32 42. The Regions have started to maintain this helpline and now we are building an army of volunteers willing to work in this area of service.

A special Committee was formed, many workshops were organized on the topic “How to Carry The Message via National Infoline”

## **RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

### **Number of the Groups**

Activity of the AA Fellowship in Russia has been initiated since the late 1980s. The first Moscow group of AA has been registered at GSO in 1987. Presently, there are near 350 groups in Russia, which reside in 120 cities and settlements. These groups are mainly concentrated in large cities. Some of these groups organize their meetings several times a week.

Unfortunately, during the recent several years, we do not have any information, which could prove any plausible changes showing to the growth in the number of AA members in Russia.

### **Structure**

The General Service Conferences related to the maintenance (service) of the Russian AA Fellowship are held in Moscow annually, in early April, each normally lasting for 3 days. GSCs are represented by: delegates of the groups from the places, where there are still no local service committees, delegates from the local committees, which render service AA, members of the GSB involved in rendering service for Russian AA, delegates of the Russian AA Fellowship elected for the WSM, ESM and AOSM. Every GSC forms Committees for development of recommendations related to the main directions of maintenance and service of the Russian AA Fellowship. The conference also elects the GSB members. In its activity the GSC is governed by the "Service Manual of the Russian AA Fellowship". Recently, the number of voting Conference participants did not exceed 40 persons.

### **Finance**

During the recent year (2012 to 2013) donations were rare. The total sum of donations was about 70 thousand rubles.

### **Literature**

At this time 9 books in Russian have been published in our country. These are: "Alcoholics Anonymous", "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions", "Living Sober", "Came to Believe", "Daily Reflections", "AA Came To Age", "As Bill Sees It", "Doctor Bob and Good Old Timers", "Service Manual" (USA and Canada). Furthermore, 40 booklets have been published.

The book "Alcoholics Anonymous" (4<sup>th</sup> edn.) has been published in its complete form, i.e. with a collection of histories. A preliminary variant (without histories) and a pocket size variant have also been published. The 25<sup>th</sup> Russian conference of the Russian AA Fellowship has approved the process of publication for this 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Furthermore, since 2008, the work bound up with refining the translation of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" has been conducted. In 2013, the preparatory work related to publishing some of the chapters with improved translation has been initiated.

Supply of the Russian AA Fellowship with literature is organized and maintained by the GSB via the area and district service committees (literary committees, intergroups). These committees fix the final prices for the books depending on the local living standards, but with an excess not larger than 20 per cent of the prices fixed by the Russian GSB.

Some of the groups are supplied with literature by the Service Foundation. This legal body is a non-commercial organization, which during the period of establishing of the service structure for the Russian AA Fellowship, also has a right of publishing and distribution of AA literature in Russian.

## **AA of Russia**

Russia encountered numerous problems bound up with the loss of unity between them. These problems arose rather long ago.

Unfortunately, when in 2012 disagreement in the viewpoints of the GSB members became quite obvious (the ratio of the members being 3 to 6), members separated into two independent parts. The root of this problem was that the Board of Administration of our legal body (i.e. the Service Foundation for the Russian AA Fellowship) by that time included not all the members of the GSB, as it was earlier foreseen by the Russian Service Manual, but only 3 members from the Board. As a result, the minority (including the Service Foundation, which possessed the licenses for publishing) refused to participate at the 24<sup>th</sup> GSC'2012, while the rest of the GSB members could not legally influence the Service Foundation because they were not official included in the Service Foundation.

Three GSB members and legal body's employees, who refused to participate and report at the 24<sup>th</sup> GSC, organized a separate meeting in May of 2012 (with a small number of representatives of AA groups), which they called a Conference. )

As employees of Service Foundation rejected to participate in the 24<sup>th</sup> GSC, its delegates decided to register a new GSB's legal body to serve Russian AA. It was set up in 2012 and it was called The Foundation of Support of AA "Unity" and it is controlled by the Russian AA trusted servants - Russian GSB.

In April of 2013, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary GSC was held in Moscow, which brought together 39 regional structures and groups represented by the delegates and GSB members, who represented 256 AA groups of the total near 350 groups. A delegate to AOSM, ESM and a new GSB were elected and many other problems were solved during this GSC.

Unfortunately all the attempts to unite both parts of Russian AA were not successful. The former AA Service Foundation and three former GSB members held in May' 2013 their own separate meeting. 53 AA groups participated in this meeting.

All this has a negative effect on joint action to incur the AA message to Russia. However, most groups in Russia understand and support action by the Conference AA Russia, and sympathized with the separated AA members and hope that sanity will return to them and the unity of the Russian AA will be restored soon.

Annually, there are plenty of local conventions, forums AA. It has become a tradition to hold an international forum of Russian-speaking AA on BB (Alcoholics Anonymous on Baltic Beach), which is held in mid-September in Svetlogorsk . It is attended by representatives of the Russian-speaking AA from the former Soviet republics, Europe, and America.

Many years works international Russian-speaking online AA group " Vesvalo ." Also AA meetings are held in Russian on Skype and paltalke

### **Relations with Other Countries**

Russian GSB has contacts with AA Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Kazakstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, UK.

Russian GSO is also serving Russian-speaking groups in Kishinev(Moldova), Pavlograd (Kazakstan), Ulan-Bator (Mongolia), Mogilev, Lida (Belarus), Haifa (Israel), Stokholm, Helsinki, Los-Angeles, London(UK).

We keep a permanent contact with the GSO in New York.

### **Other Services**

Many groups hold their meetings in treatment centres, hospitals and prisons in Russia.  
Russian GSB's website [www.rsoaa.ru](http://www.rsoaa.ru) works.

## SLOVAKIA

### Numbers of Groups

The first AA group in Slovakia was created in 1990 in Bratislava. Since ESM 2011 the number of AA groups increased from 35 to 41. There is one English speaking group and one group with meetings in both Hungarian and Slovak language.

### General Service Conference (GSC)

Each group sends its delegate directly to General Service Conference. It is a temporary solution as number of groups is relatively low and not all regions have built their service structure yet. The General Service Conference members are: groups' delegates, national delegates, a GSB chairman, a GSO chairman, non-alcoholic trustees, a GSB treasurer and managing editor of AA magazine. Members of GSC are divided into four standing committees: Administrative, Financial, Literary Committee and Committee for Public Relations. The General Service Conference takes place once a year usually in April. It lasts one day.

### The Service Manual

The first Service Conference in 2011 concluded that we need thorough Service Manual to make our service efficient. Therefore Service Manual Committee was created. The proposal of Service Manual AA Slovakia was presented to General Service Conference one year after. It was inspired by service manuals from different countries (USA and Canada, Great Britain, Denmark, Ireland, Poland) and ratified by General Service Conference in 2013.

### General Service Board (GSB)

GSB consists of GSB chairman, GSO chairman, 2 non-alcoholic trustees, 6-9 alcoholic trustees (from each region one - regions with largest numbers of groups may elect 2 trustees) and a treasurer. National delegates and managing editor of Prameň are members of GSB without right to vote.

Slovak AA Service Structure does not include any paid posts.

### Literature

AA Slovakia distributes following General Service Conference-approved literature in Slovak.

Books: *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *Living Sober*, *Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions*, *Daily Reflections* and *As Bill Sees It*.

Pamphlets: *The AA Group... Where it all begins*, *Is A.A. for You?* *A.A. as a Resource for the Health Care Professional*, *A Newcomer Asks and 44 Questions*.

Books *Daily Reflections* and *As Bill Sees It* were published in 2010. The costs were covered by the loan from AA in Norway and Poland. The sale of both titles made it possible to fully repay the loan after two years.



Recently we are preparing translations of *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, *The Language of the Heart* and new edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* with personal stories of Slovak AA members.

## **Finance**

Our major source of finance is the sale of the literature (65%) - the rest are members' contributions. Members' contributions had declining tendency since last ESM. Some groups are not able to contribute and some groups are not willing. The Sevens Tradition is there for one of the topics at the next National Convection. Our financial reserve would cover our expenses for one year.

## **Prisons**

There was done a lot work during last 3 years in prisons. We succeeded in building of good relationship with head administration of prisons and created 5 AA groups in different prisons, both for men and women. We would like to organise information meetings about AA for employees of prisons and workshops for AA members about those activities. We hope to start more groups in prisons.

## **Hospitals**

Number of treatment centres for alcoholics where AA member regularly inform alcoholics about AA, or there is an AA meeting, increased from 4 to 6 since last ESM. There still doesn't exist a treatment centre based on 12 steps programme in Slovakia.

## **Relations with Other Countries**

The inspiring relations we have with Poland through common attendance at AA events, by having our observers at Polish Service Conferences and through inspiration how to approach the service. Very close and warm relationship we have with AA in Czech Republic. Thanks to financial loan from Poland and Norway we were able to publish two books (*Daily Reflections*, *As Bill sees it*). Great possibility to learn is attendance of our observer at General Service Conference in York fully funded by AA GB. Our members are taking parts at different AA events all over the Europe more and more often. We don't have a sponsor as a country and we don't sponsor any country nether.

## **Internet & Websites**

Our official website [www.alkoholici-anonymni.sk](http://www.alkoholici-anonymni.sk) was recently reconstructed so the access to the relevant information is easier as well as maintenance.

We also have an e-mail online AA group called *Sober space* established in 2006 with almost 500 Slovak and Czech speaking members from all over the world. It is a good solution for all those who do not have an AA group in their towns or for alcoholics whose health does not allow them to take part in live meetings.

## Magazine

Since April 2002 we have been publishing our magazine *Prameň* quarterly. The magazine brings testimonies of AA members about their experience strength and hope. Furthermore, there are information about AA meetings, AA events and AA literature. The magazine is published in 500 copies. They are distributed to treatment centres, libraries and AA groups. *Prameň* is self-supported.

## SLOVENIA

**Slovenia** is a small country with population of 2 million. First AA group was established on November 6<sup>th</sup> 1989. Today there are 47 groups with approximately 500 members, organized in classic way. Each group has a chairman, treasurer, literature man (in a case the group is smaller, the treasurer is usually also responsible for literature), and a delegate (GSR – General Service Representative), elected for two year period.

Once a year GS delegates of all groups come together to join a **General Service Conference**, to listen to Committee reports and discuss yearly program. Every second year delegates elect one third of GSB (General Service Board) members.

**General Service Board** consists of president, who is non-alcoholic, secretary and his deputy and three committee leaders for finances, public relations and literature. Each committee consists of three members with six years mandate. Previous, present and future leader rotate on their posts every two years.

**General Service Office** form members of GSB, which function also as administrative workers of the Board.

**Financial Committee** of A.A. fellowship in Slovenia is organized according to Slovenian legislation as a Society with its own by-laws and bank account managed by professional accountant. Financial sources are exclusively contribution of AA members and literature and we do not accept any outside contributions.

**Committee for Public Relations** has a good collaboration with media. In newspapers are notes about AA, occasionally A.A.s are invited to appear anonymously in TV shows dealing with alcoholism, and in radio broadcast talk show in night time.

CPC (cooperation with professional community) is more intensive in last years. Every year we present A.A. program at Medical school as an informative meeting for doctors specializing in psychiatry, to students at Faculty for Social Work, and to workers in Centres for Social Work. There is one AA group in main state penitentiary while smaller institutions allow inmates to join outside meetings.

**Committee for publications** is working hard. So far five books were translated and published (Alcoholics Anonymous – complete size and abridged pocket size, 12&12, Living Sober, Daily Reflections, As Bill Sees It) and 10 pamphlets. All translations were licensed by AAWS. The book *Came to Believe* has been translated and is in progress to be published.

Occasionally we also publish a Slovenian magazine named KorAAk. Frequency of publication of AA literature is not limited by translators (who are AA members) but by the amount of money available on our bank account.

All information for still suffering alcoholics are available on automatic telephone responder +386 1 4338 225. There is also web page [www.aa-drustvo.si](http://www.aa-drustvo.si) with relevant information and list of meetings in Slovenia and e-mail [aa.slo@amis.net](mailto:aa.slo@amis.net).

In October 2012 Slovenian AA successfully organized 1<sup>st</sup> International AA Convention in Slovenia and in October 2013 the 2<sup>nd</sup> International AA Convention.

To increase the efficiency of our activities plus to increase collective consciousness we established Working Conference modelled by ESM. Working Conference will meet one time per year.

Elected delegates on Working Conference will study thoroughly messages from groups regarding the AA activities for the next year. All suggestions from Working Conference will be forwarded to the vote on the spring GSO Conference.

First Working Conference will meet in November 2013.

In last year our Delegate was first time present in ESM in Frankfurt and we finally realize how important is that our Fellowship is connected with others. As a result we are attending as a new country in the present WSM.

## **SPAIN**

### **Structure**

Nowadays there are four regions in Spain, bringing together 25 Areas with 576 Groups, (12 of them in Prisons) and about 9,000 members.

In our country there are non Spanish speaking Groups. We work together and we perform regional and national events. Their opinion is important for us, so we invite them to Regional Service Forums in order to know their point of view and facilitate their integration into our structure.

We continue celebrating four Regional Service Forums. At this form, we try to achieve a better evolution of the Areas and allow that the work of the General Service Board be known by the Areas and Groups which compose them.

### **General Service Board**

Two Delegates of the General Service Board attended the World Service Meeting held in Rye Brook, New York, from 21th to 25th October 2012.

General Service Board has maintained contacts with various official bodies: Health Ministry, Secretary General of Prisons, Department of Addictions, Government Delegate for the National Plan on Drugs, Medical Chief of Staff, Moncloa's Presidency Ministry, and Supreme Judicial Council.

Also, General Service Board has participated in several National Medical Congresses and conferences on topics related to alcoholism, such as XL Sociodrogalcohol National Conference and XXXIII SEMFYC National Congress.

### **Finance**

We have been covering almost all the budget approved by our Conference thanks to the commitment and responsibility of the members of the Groups and Areas with their regular contributions.

Our Prudent Reserve Fund has been increasing gradually until December 2011. However, this situation has changed this year, being nowadays in a minimal level.

We hope that the communication, debate and discussion that have taken place in our last Conference and the information about it to Areas and Groups get stabilize this situation. Nevertheless, at July 31th we still have a deficit of contributions regarding our budget.

### **Events and Public Information**

In the commemoration of the Alcoholics Anonymous anniversary in June 2012, we conducted a briefing at the Government of the Balearic Islands headquarters, in Mallorca. This event was presented by a senior member of the Balearic Government, with the assistance of the Head of the Health Department and members of our General Service Board.

Following this meeting, the Balearic Government included information about our Community on their website.

### **Literature**

Through Literature servers of the Groups and Areas, we continue to encourage the usage and understanding of this vital tool for recovery.

The Public Information Dossier, with its summary of the characteristics of our Community, is extremely useful to providing complete and easily accessible information about us.

To promote the knowledge about Alcoholics Anonymous, we continue enrolling in our newsletter Akron 1935 to health professionals, social workers and others.

## SWEDEN

AA Sweden was founded in 1956. Today we have about 465 groups; there are also English, Finnish, Icelandic, Polish, Russian and Spanish speaking meetings.

The General Service Board consists, at the moment, of seven trustees five from our regions and two friends of AA. The Western region has no trustee selected at the moment.

Our international delegates (two Nordic and two World Service) is invited to the General Service Board's meeting.

The trustees of the Board and the international delegates are elected by the Service Conference.

Assisting the General Service Board are:

- the Association Alcoholic Anonymous in Sweden
- the General Service Office
- the following committees: Economy; Information; Literature; Nomination; Phone (new from 2012) and Policy.

In the committees there is good professional knowledge in conjunction with good experience of AA in order to pursuit and prepare various questions. The person calling together the committees is a member of the General Service Board.

The Association Alcoholic Anonymous in Sweden is a registered non-profit association, founded in 2001. The General Service Board is the principal of the association and represents the association against the society. The association runs the publishing business and is also responsible for the General Service Office. At the General Service Office there are two persons working full-time.

For all above commissions there is a clear description of the service and the qualifications desired.

### Literature/Publishing

"AA's History in Sweden" – revised was published in April 2013.

The approved AA-literature today consists of ten translated books and also one book edited by Swedish AA. There is about 20 booklets and pamphlets and also decals, shades, CDs and DVDs in Swedish.

The magazine "Bulletinen" – "A meeting between the meetings" is published with six issues per year. We also have an excellent newsletter "Servicebladet", where all important news is published, i.e. from the Service Conference, GSB and GSO.

### Information

The Swedish website, [www.aa.se](http://www.aa.se) has been increased and is an important link in the network of carrying the message. The meeting-list is available. During the last year about 1350 orders of AA-literature have been made via the webshop, i.e. 75 % of the total orders.

Today we have 31 local information committees.

## **Finances**

AA in Sweden is still not self-supporting. Approximately 50 % of our income comes from the sales of literature. Sweden has attributed to the International Literature fund SEK 25.000 almost each year. AA in Sweden has also paid the full fee for two delegates to the World Service Meetings hoping that by doing so it will make it possible for new countries in AA to participate in this very important event.

## **Working with Other Countries**

Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden are taking turns in hosting the annual Nordic Meeting (NM) and Nordic Delegate meeting.

## **Events during 2012/2013**

AA in Sweden has had its current structure since 1999. The GSB decided in December 2012 to review the structure for central service and appointed therefore a working group, which will submit a final report at our Service Conference 2015.

A Service meeting is held, in the beginning of November, each year with participating of the General Service Board, all the members of the committees, international delegates, Association Alcoholic Anonymous and representatives from GSO.

The Service Conference 2012 was held April 9-11 and the theme was "Service – gratitude in action". Participating in this conference were 21 delegates, seven trustees, one employee from GSO, one member of the Association Alcoholics Anonymous, one representative from Bulletin and two international delegates. There were also invited guests from Norway and Finland.

The Service Conference 2013 was held April 8-10 and the theme was "Recovery has no borders". Participating in this conference were 20 delegates, six trustees, one employee from GSO, one member of the Association Alcoholics Anonymous, one representative from Bulletin and two international delegates. There were also invited guests from Denmark and Norway.

The World Service Delegates has been participating:

- the World Service Meeting in New York, 2012
- the European Service Meeting in Frankfurt 2013

The Nordic Delegates has been participating:

- the Service Conference in Denmark (2012 and 2013), Finland (2012) and Norway (2012 and 2013)
- the Nordic Meeting (incl. Nordic Delegate Meeting) in Norway (2012) and Sweden (2013)
- the Nordic Delegate Theme Meeting in Finland (2012) and Denmark (2013)



## **SWITZERLAND (FRENCH SPEAKING)**

### **Literature**

The Literature office works in close cooperation with the literature offices of France and of Belgium. The person in charge of this office has met 3 times this year so far with the "Workgroup to Harmonize Literature and Periodicals" (Le Groupe de Travail Harmonisation de la Littérature et Périodique). The people responsible for the Literature Offices of France, Belgium and French Switzerland and others make up the team. A lot of progress has been made in uniting our endeavours to transmit the message in French. Literature sales are going well, both to the groups and during our area conventions.

### **Finance**

After 2 years of going somewhat into the red, in 2012 AASRI finances returned to being within budget. Thanks to adjustments that were made at the annual Conference, as well as the groups responding to an appeal to send in more in the way of contributions, the financial deficit was remedied.

### **Number of Groups**

There are 58 groups In the French Swiss and Italian Region: 5 groups are in Italian Switzerland and the other 53 are in French Switzerland.

### **General Structure**

AASRI is divided into 3 areas. The Cantons of Geneva & Vaud Area; the Cantons of Valais & Tecino Area; and the Cantons of Fribourg, Jura, & Neuchatel Area. Within the 3 areas there are 5 Intergroups.

The AASRI General Service Board is comprised of 2 Class A administrators (non-alcoholic), 6 Class B administrators; also on the board are: the person in charge of the committee that organizes the yearly service conference, the person who responsible for a Public Information Office, the person responsible for the Literature Office, a very busy secretary, the person responsible for external relations, and last but not least the European delegate, and the World Service Meeting delegate who is elected in the AASRI region according to an alternating format with the Belgium region, and it's now our turn to have a delegate, who will help represent all of French speaking Europe at the next two World Service Meetings.

### **Conferences**

We hold a Conference for 2 days every year in March. Each AA group in the region is encouraged to send delegates. Guests also attend from France, Belgium and German Switzerland.

In our last 2 service conferences, 2012 & 2013, 40 groups sent delegates to the Conference.

Matters to be dealt with at the Conference are selected from proposals sent in by the groups. A GSO committee reviews the proposals and then transmits them to the groups inviting group members to join an advance workshop which meets to prepare the topic for the Conference workshops.

The 2012 Conference workshop topics:

- AA online: what's official what isn't? Also does AASRI need a service position for the AASRI website?
- Public Information in schools: what language to use, does it help to describe drunk experiences, does the age of the speaker matter, should we "advertise", what's the difference between a PI in nursing school and a junior high school?
- AA and the new generation of youth: times are changing, social media dominates and it's already being used to transmit the message. What guidelines are necessary to stay within AA traditions? Also, what suggestions can be given to the groups when teenagers or young adults come to a meeting?
- Money plus Spirituality equals Unity. The topic was to discuss how to communicate AASRI finances in greater depth to the groups.

The 2013 Conference workshop topics:

- 13<sup>th</sup> Step Problems: if a member is putting pressure on another member in pursuit of an affective, i.e. sexual, relationship, how should such a situation be managed?
- Public Information: attraction rather than promotion, what's the difference?
- Service: Rotation, sponsoring services, what to do when someone is stuck long-term in a service position, how can old-timers be of service when they've left service positions?
- The Office of Public Information and the Intergroup Public Information Committees: autonomy and unity, what actions need coordination i.e. poster campaigns.

## **Public Information**

The AASRI Office of Public Information has encouraged a more united effort in the way of having united poster campaigns in order to help the intergroups save money as more can be printed when a poster is printed for the whole region.

The Office has also met with members responsible for PI in German Switzerland so that the presentation and image that the public sees in IT media will be the same, such as the general look of the respective home pages. It was decided to translate to French the German Swiss pamphlet for passing the message on to youth. Another ongoing project in conjunction with France and Belgium is the creation of smartphone app.

A service position for the website has been created a person responsible for this was elected by the PI Office members.

A billboard campaign has continued on a regular basis, Clear Channel put up our billboard free of charge for 10 weeks in 2012.

## CEFE

The "Carrefour Européen Francophone d'Echange" is a workgroup that meets to determine how the 3 French European language areas can grow in action and unity to continue to progress in living up to the Toronto "I am responsible" pledge.

A proposal to use the same jargon to describe conference procedure was accepted by the 3 service conferences. A proposal to elect a replacement World Service meeting delegate was accepted. The group also proposed that in the end it would be better not to have a single website for France, Belgium and French Switzerland which has also been agreed to.

### **External Relations (Jails, Hospitals and Countries Sponsorship), etc**

The translations that AASRI produced in Malagasy for the groups in Madagascar are being well used. AA members from our region have visited the country and met with the groups.

Two members of our General Service Board have participated in the French annual conference, and two others in the Belgium conference.

The person responsible for external relations has also participated in the Al-Anon yearly convention, which also holds several AA meetings. He also attended and participated in the annual German Switzerland Service Conference.

**Prisons:** Some regular meetings have been held in a prison in Valais, Switzerland. As a rule obtaining permission to transmit the message in prisons in Switzerland is very difficult.

**Helpline:** In our region each intergroup is responsible for their local area helpline phone which has been very successful and proved to be more effective than having one phone number that covers the whole area.

## **SWITZERLAND (GERMAN SPEAKING)**

### **History**

AA Switzerland was established in 1963. Initial meetings of this time are reported for Basle, Lucerne and Zurich. This first meetings were supported by German friends, particularly friends from the Karlsruhe group. In two years AA Switzerland will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and preliminaries are ongoing.

### **Structure**

AA Switzerland is one of 12 Intergroups of the German speaking part of Europe, i.e. Germany, Austria, (including Southern Tyrol) and Switzerland. The Swiss Intergroup consists of six regional units.

The GSO of Switzerland, established in 1996, is operated by one person on a 50 % part-time basis. The office is located in Zurich. The GSO regularly organises the meeting of both the General Service Board (GSB) and the General Service Conference (GSC), which usually takes place twice a year, i.e. in spring and fall. The GSO performs commercial tasks and facilitates flow of information or correspondence to other GSOs and between delegates and committee members.

### **Membership and Groups**

About 110 groups are registered in the German speaking part of Switzerland with an estimated number of 800 members. English speaking groups are located in major cities of Switzerland, such as Basle, Berne, Geneva, Lucerne and Zurich.

### **Literature**

The GSO Zurich orders the Conference Approved Literature from the GSO Munich and sells it to the groups, AA members or any other interested person. Usually one or two Swiss AAs join the meeting of the German Literature team.

Switzerland edits its own monthly magazine "Irgendwo AA" (Somewhere AA) including a Newsletter "AA Weltweit" (AA world-wide). The newsletter mainly reports about European and International themes of AA.

### **Finance**

The balance sheet shows a solid financial situation of AA Switzerland.

### **Latest News**

In recent times, there are signs that fewer and fewer friends are ready to take over services. Particularly at the level of General Service Board (GSB) and the General Service Conference (GSC). However, individual groups too, complain that nobody wants to do anymore services. Signs of the present time? Expression of a society that is purely focused on consumption? Or aging of the members? Unfortunately, fewer and fewer younger people find their way into the groups.

Very encouraging is the cooperation with the French-speaking friends in Switzerland. In the meantime we have the leaflets and the website coordinated. Switzerland as AA begins to have a uniform appearance. Some sort of corporate identity within AA Switzerland.

## UKRAINE

A.A. arrived in Ukraine in 1989. Today more than 100 active A.A. groups in more than 40 cities are registered in Ukraine. And over 1,300 A.A. members attend them.

There are five AA regions functioning in Kyiv, Volyn, Lugansk and Donetsk, Poltava, Lviv and Ivano-Frankovsk areas.

### Service Structure

The 14<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian Service Conference (May, 2012) adopted regulations for the A.A. Service Conference in Ukraine, the Statute of the Conference, as well as regulations on the Functioning of National A.A. Service in Ukraine. These documents reflect the changes that have taken place in the structure of A.A. service in our country, the formation of A.A. regions and their representation at the Conference, the formation of four Conference committees, etc.

Our 15<sup>th</sup> regular National Service Conference was held in Kyiv in May, 2013. There were up to five representatives from each of the five A.A. regions, four delegates to the Conference Committees and one Class B trustee, and two international delegates, our World and European Service Meeting delegates. This Conference elected the friend of A.A., the psychiatrist from Kyiv, as a Class A trustee. A few representatives of A.A. groups and regions, where there are still no local service bodies, participated in the conference, too. We are very pleased that two representatives of G.S.O. A.A. U.S.A./Canada, The General Manager and The Representative of the International Desk, came from New York, and worked hard with us together there, at the conference. Also there were our friends from Russia and Poland, who actively participated in the Conference meetings.

Our National Service Board currently consists of seven members: five Class B trustees elected at regional service conferences, one Class A trustee and one international delegate, our representative at the World and European Service Meetings.

The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian Service Conferences in 2011-2012 resolved to create four standing Conference committees: Literature, Informational, Organizational and Finance.

Literature Committee coordinates the work on preparing and editing of translations into Ukrainian and Russian of the books approved by the Conference.

Informational Committee began its work three years ago and today it continues to work within its mandate and objectives to improve the effectiveness of public information about A.A., and provides the members of A.A. groups with information assistance in bringing the message of A.A. to still suffering alcoholics.

Organizational Committee is working on improvement of the structure of A.A. in Ukraine, preparing National Service Conference meetings, helps to organize A.A. events and events under the aegis of A.A. (regional service conferences, workshops on 12 Steps and 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts for Service, A.A. forums, etc.)

Finance Committee is working on recommendations on effective use of donations from A.A. groups, rational use of current funds, building up the pricing policy on A.A. literature published in Ukraine, monitoring of income and expense generation of the National Service Office.

Our National Service Office, the Ukrainian A.A. Service Centre, was founded in 2003 by the decision of the 4<sup>th</sup> A.A. Service Conference in Ukraine and officially registered as the public organization "Ukrainian Centre of Service for Alcoholics Anonymous". The office represents needs and interests of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ukraine in their interactions with public authorities, clergy, healthcare and educational institutions and mass media, as well as in international contacts.

Ukrainian A.A. Service Centre has one paid employee who works five days a week in the office.

Recently, the A.A. in Ukraine started a broad discussion about the need to improve the work of the office. We are all in the midst of this work now.

### **Literature**

A sufficiently big number and range of A.A. books and pamphlets approved by General Service Conference are available in the Ukrainian A.A. office. AA literature is distributed through the office by mail, through regional service structures as well as during A.A. forums and conventions in the cities of Ukraine. We notably advanced in receiving licenses on publishing and distribution of A.A. literature in Russian in Ukraine. Now our efforts are aimed on self-sufficiency of A.A. literature in Ukrainian.

Earlier this year, we finished the work on the translation of the book "Living Sober" into the Ukrainian language. We received the permission from A.A.W.S., and published the first printing of this book in Ukraine. Also we prepared a few pamphlets and flyers in Ukrainian, and are going to start publishing them at an early date.

The Anonymous Alcoholic's magazine in Ukraine, "Dzherelo", issues quarterly and is distributed mostly among A.A. groups and members in Ukraine. The information in the magazine is presented in the two most widespread languages in Ukraine – Ukrainian and Russian.

### **Finance**

Financial revenues in 2012 were about 107 936 UAH and in the first half of 2013 they were at the level of 59 193 UAH.

Financial expenses in 2012 were about 96 130 UAH and in the first half of 2013 they were at the level of 78 637 UAH.

Sources of funding are: the distribution of AA literature – 79 208 UAH (73.38 %), voluntary contributions from A.A. groups and regions in Ukraine – 23 240.5 UAH (21.53 %) and private anonymous donations – 5 487.5 UAH (5.08 %). This is the data for 2012. During the first half of 2013, the proportion was 41 229 UAH (69.65 %), 14 954 UAH (25.26 %) and 3 010 UAH (5.09 %) respectively. In such a state of affairs it is often difficult to hold seminars for service structures and information meetings.

Informational materials and A.A. groups' directories are published due to donations from A.A. members and A.A. groups. Monthly income of National Service Office allows us to pay for office rent, for one office worker, office supplies and supplies for office equipment, telephone and Internet access.

### **Meetings/Forums**

About 15 major A.A. holiday forums are held throughout Ukraine during a year. The extended meetings of the National Service Board are held in Zhytomyr (November), Lutsk (July) and Kyiv (February) at the time of such forums.

International delegates from Ukraine take part in service conferences in Poland, Russia, and at European and the World Service Meetings.

### **Public Information**

Cooperation with the printed and online media is carried out in the form of placement of informational articles about A.A. Community, as well as announcements about the time and place of A.A. meetings. A new form of cooperation – a press conference with journalists on Skype – has appeared. Regular radio interviews are also an important part of our contribution in bringing the ideas of A.A. to the general public. Interaction with state social services for the last five years has brought fruitful results.

### **Prisons**

The A.A. group "Concertino" was established in Poltava men's Correctional Facility number 64 in March, 2012. A.A. Meetings are held weekly on Saturdays. At each meeting there are four to six persons condemned, and one or two representatives from the A.A. Fellowship in Poltava.

We have established good relations with the administration of this prison.

Also now already for some time an A.A. group begins to operate in the Poltava women's Correctional Facility number 65. There meetings are held for the time being every two weeks.

### **Internet & Websites**

The internet site of A.A. in Ukraine, [www.aa.org.ua](http://www.aa.org.ua) has been in operation for eight years. It has information about the "12 Steps of A.A." and "12 Traditions of A.A.", addresses and dates of A.A. meetings in Ukraine.



There are also links to web resources of A.A. in other countries, to the European and World A.A. Internet sites. The sections "Announcements" and "News" are constantly updated with information about upcoming A.A. events (and events under the aegis of A.A.) in the cities of Ukraine and in the other countries.

Earlier this year, the "Conference" section appeared on our website, in which we place the actual information on the activities of the National Service of A.A. in Ukraine.

### **Relations with Other Countries**

We are constantly interacting with the A.A. service structures in Poland, Russia, the European office in the UK and the GSO in New York. Our delegates and observers of the national and regional service structures typically take part in conferences and conventions in neighbouring countries.

Our Polish friends regularly participate in service conferences and A.A. conventions in western Ukraine. Region A.A. Katowice (Poland) actively helps Kyiv region in A.A. activities such as workshops on the Steps, Traditions and service principles, and participates in the development of the A.A. movement in the eastern regions of Ukraine.

The workshops in Kyiv have already included more than 15 Polish speakers recommended by Region A.A. Katowice. We appreciate their presence and fruitful participation in A.A. events in Ukraine, and rely on this support in the future.

We are very grateful to the Region Katowice (Poland) also for their sponsorship, which has helped us to structure our service, to create service committees and to understand more clearly their goals and objectives, who should do what and what should be done. We have created four standing Conference committees, which have started to discuss ideas and initiatives proposed A.A. members, to propose their own, make recommendations and implement decisions. We realize that we cannot keep what we have, unless we share it with others. Our contacts with the GSO in New York and Europe are supported by our service structures, and we plan to work more closely through our international delegates.

For the past three years, our community has had the opportunity to share their experiences in A.A. service with other countries. Experience in dealing with issues and conflicts in neighbouring countries makes it possible to implement three A.A. Legacies, Unity, Recovery and Service, in each group and regional structure. We believe that over the next few years, all our efforts must be directed at strengthening the unity of A.A. in Ukraine and throughout the world.

Assessing the experience of cooperation with the region Katowice, we came to a conclusion that we need in foreign A.A. members, who are recovering in different countries, since their every visit helps us organize ourselves. Together we are developing Alcoholics Anonymous in Ukraine and A.A. as a whole.

In the last few years the movement of A.A. in Ukraine has gained new experience to overcome certain difficulties in its development. We hope that our more experienced partners from the other countries will be able to help us to set and develop new priorities in bringing the A.A. ideas, and to strengthen the image of A.A.

Finally, we would like to invite A.A. members from all countries to join us to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of A.A. in Ukraine, which will take place on 27-29 June, 2014, in Kyiv, and will be held under the motto "25 Years - Free, Joyous, Happy".

# **COMMITTEES & WORKSHOPS**

## AGENDA/POLICY/ADMISSIONS/FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chairman: **Penny A** Great Britain

Alternate: **Ad S** Netherlands

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Lotte R	Austria	Alunia D-K	Poland
Michal S	Czech Republic	Vladimi E	Russia
Helle V	Denmark	Sasha Ana Z	Slovenia
Einar J	Iceland	Angeles UL	Spain
Pat B	Ireland	Gunnar M	Sweden
Colin T	Malta	Mike G	Switzerland (French)
Piet van Z	Netherlands		

The Chairman opened the meeting with the Preamble and welcomed the delegates who were invited to introduce themselves.

1. In your country, what is the process by which candidates for ESM are selected and then approved? What are the criteria for candidacy to be chosen as your country's delegate?

**In many countries members are informed about the post of ESM delegate and invited to apply. Applications may go to the General Service Board (GSB) directly or through the structure. It is either the GSB or the General Service Conference which confirms the appointment.**

**In some countries delegates come from the GSB.**

**There is the possibility in some countries that the delegate could be a non-alcoholic Trustee.**

**The criteria include:**

- **Between 2 and 10 years sobriety**
- **Service history**
- **Knowledge of English**

**The size of AA in a country, and how long the structure has existed may affect how formal the process is.**

2. Suggest ways in which the general membership could become more aware of the benefits of the ESM.

- Spread more information through the structure
- Translate reports
- Talk about how the ESM works
- Conduct workshops at all levels
- Send 2 delegates to the ESM, rather than 1
- Report to the General Service Conference
- Share about the ESM at all opportunities
- Put report and further information on the website
- Share personal experience and highlights which will interest your country's membership
- Talk about difficulties other countries' experience as members will be encouraged to help and become involved
- Invite ESM delegates from other countries to your General Service Conference

3. If the delegate's home country is not ready to fully support the expenses of the delegate/s, is there any sense in making small or symbolic donations to the ESM fund?

The answer is yes:

- Making such a donation helps a country and its delegates feel part of the world Fellowship
- Creates a sense of belonging
- Creates a sense of responsibility not only for your own country, but also for the development of AA in other countries.
- All contributions to the ESM Fund help make the ESM available to new structures

4. How do the delegates from your country encourage others to become involved in service at the ESM?

- Share experience of being a delegate
- Sponsorship
- Look for enthusiastic people
- Share about your own fears prior to coming, to reassure others that they can do it too
- Emphasise a delegate is going to be with other AAs!
- Maybe observers could attend the ESM

5. How could the process of the ESM be explained more clearly to assist delegates?

**It is done so well, how can you possibly improve it!**

**The staff are professional, loving and helpful, they are truly service minded.**

6. Suggest a theme for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM to be held in 2015.

**The Committee selected 'Keep It Simple ' as the theme for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM**

7. Elect a Chairman and Alternate for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Agenda, Policy, Admissions, Finance Committee.

**The Committee elected Colin T (Malta) as Chair of the Agenda, Policy, Admissions, Finance Committee for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM, and Michal S (Czech Republic) was elected as Alternate.**

Chairman: **Ilze K** Latvia

Alternate: **Sasha Ana Z** Slovenia

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Maxim S	Belarus	Ad S	Netherlands
Ivo d'H	Belgium (Flemish)	Bjorn J K	Norway
Juha P	Finland	Jarmila K	Slovakia
Patsy O'K	Ireland	Amador Juan AG	Spain
Loreta B	Lithuania	Mikhailo A	Ukraine
Robert BB	Malta		

The Chairman opened the meeting with the Preamble and welcomed the delegates who were invited to introduce themselves.

1. Do you make available books and pamphlets on your country's official website
  - a) Read only (not printable).
  - b) Download for free (printable).
  - c) Download for charge (e-books)

Please share experience.

**Only some countries have leaflets and/or pamphlets to download or read on the website.**

**It was felt that if they had them all especially books, available to download for free on the website, they would be losing money.**

**It was also felt that having the Group handbook online not only in print, was a great idea, as we have many changes to the handbook each year, and it would be easier to implement any changes.**

**At the moment no one has eBooks available on their website, but a few are in discussion about this for the future.**

2. Please share your country's experience in using the latest technology to carry the message. How have you dealt with the challenges of making the message effective and interesting without breaking Traditions?

**A few countries have to rely on the Internet/Skype for meetings as there are not enough meetings, or the meetings are too far geographically away from each other. It was felt that these meetings are working well.**

No one has meeting or profile on social network site on a national level. We know there is some group activity on network sites. There is a big concern over internet safety and anonymity.

Some countries produce leaflets on internet safety.

All countries have their own website where you will find helpline and meeting locations.

3. Give a short description of how a new literature or translation project is established, carried out and approved in your country. Who owns the copyright?

In most countries any new literature project will go to Conference for approval and once approved, will then go to the Literature Committee for them to work on.

There is a slight confusion on whether you need to ask permission from GSO New York to start translation as some countries have to wait a long time on the approval for translating and publishing of literature.

There is a good result in translating if we don't rely only on professional translators, but also have some group work on translating and/or proof reading.

4. Do you or are you planning to produce special material for young people in AA?

No one is producing any special literature for young people at the moment. They do have the general young people's literature for example: *Too Young*, *Message to Young People* and *Young People in AA*.

It was felt that young people have to be welcomed and integrated into groups and the programme.

5. Elect a Chairman and Alternate for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Literature/Publishing and Media Communications Committee.

The Committee elected Patsy O'K (Ireland) as Chair of the Literature / Publishing and Media Communications Committee for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM, and Loretta B (Lithuania) was elected as Alternate.



Bjarne T	Denmark	Gita T	Latvia
Marc B	France	Nils Ivar S	Norway
Erkki H	Finland	Piotr H	Poland
Geoff H	Great Britain	Alica B	Slovakia
Gudrun F E	Iceland	Nina B	Slovenia
Ingrid de S	Italy	Martin S	Switzerland (German)

The Chairman opened the meeting with the Preamble and welcomed the delegates who were invited to introduce themselves.

1. How do the ESM delegates carry out their duties and responsibilities in the time between European Service Meetings?

Many first term delegates get experience from previous delegates to try and find their role. All delegates write a report which is useful as they are brought up to date and become more familiar with the work in their Fellowship. Some delegates translate the final report into their own language.

Reports are given to the General Service Board, Conferences, Service Meetings and Workshops. Many write articles for newsletters, magazines and websites about the themes and experiences at the ESM.

Some members attend other country's conferences and conventions.

The ESM mailing list is a very important tool as it can be used to ask and answer questions.

It was felt to be very important to work with other countries to share experience and understanding.

2. If a speaker from another country is invited to speak at a National AA event in your country, what expenses are covered? Where does the money come from to cover these expenses.

Some countries had no experience of this as they tended to invite speakers from their own countries – but if they did all expenses would be paid from general contributions.

Some countries cannot cover expenses so they ask people who are already attending to speak. It is hoped that in future expenses will be paid to speakers.

Some countries invite delegates to attend their conventions and cover hotel costs but not travel costs from their convention's budget.

Private groups who invite speakers, cover the costs from their own contributions.

Some countries have speakers from local countries who pay their own costs because they are very low. Other countries include the expenses in their budgets for all speakers. Some countries pay for guests from developing Fellowships if needed.

3. What particular things has your country taken from the experience of others to help it develop.
  - One country updated their website using the same supplier as another's after seeing theirs, and the new website is running very well.
  - Literature seen at other country's conferences have been adapted and published.
  - Some countries' structures were developed from their neighbouring countries.
  - Non alcoholic Trustees have been appointed.
  - Seeing that other countries have similar problems to their own, gives hope that in the future they will be solved.
  - Other countries' manuals are used to develop the structure.
  - A European Headquarters was suggested to develop European AA.
  - Many countries attended conferences in other countries, and used their experiences to improve their own conferences. For example – asking the Fellowship for the conference questions.
  - Neighbouring countries share experience of their structures and countries sharing the same language sometimes share literature.
  - It is useful to ask other countries for help on how to attract newcomers.
  - It is inspiring to attend international events

4. At what point in its development should one AA country start to share its experience with other countries?

The sooner the better! AA is sharing. All experience is useful and it is never too late to learn.

Talking to other Fellowships gives experience, strength and hope, even when struggling. It helps not to take anything for granted, and also helps AA to develop and grow.

It is important to help developing countries by sponsoring them and helping them to create a service structure. It is useful to ask for experience and learn from the beginning. This experience can then be shared with other countries in the future.

Literature is also very useful for experience and it is important to read it.

Discussion groups have been developed between countries speaking the same language and have been very useful.

Countries can also learn from developing structures, it is important to share experience as soon as possible.

5. Before making organisational decisions does your country contact other countries to find out their experience, if so what were the benefits?

Most countries do contact others for experience and useful ideas can come from attending other countries conferences, especially structures and voting procedures.

It is very useful to have access to the ESM mailing list, and experience can be gained easily. It is a good source of information and helpful to learn from the mistakes of others, so as to avoid making the same ones.

In one country when making organisational decisions, the service board look at the system in other countries.

When adapting the organisation it is important to stay within the Traditions and Concepts.

The World Service Meeting is also a source of useful experience.

It can be useful to see how other countries literature and websites are presented.

6. Does your country send delegates to AA Conferences in neighbouring countries to share experience.

Many countries send delegates to other countries when invited, however some countries are unable to because of financial restrictions, but would like to in the future.

Most countries invite foreign delegates too.

It was felt to be very important to attend other countries to create unity.

Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Working with Other Countries Committee

The Committee elected Geoff H (Great Britain) as Chair of the Working with Other Countries Committee for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM, and Nina B (Slovenia) was elected as Alternate.

## WORKSHOP: WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Chairman: **Gudrun E** Iceland

Alternate: **Marc B** France

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Lotte R	Austria	Loreta B	Lithuania
Ludek T	Czech Republic	Colin T	Malta
Helle V	Denmark	Nils Ivar S	Norway
Juha P	Finland	Jarmila K	Slovakia
Patsy O'K	Ireland	Amador Juan AG	Spain
Ingrid de S	Italy	Mike G	Switzerland (French)

The Chairman opened the meeting with the Preamble and welcomed the delegates who were invited to introduce themselves.

Share experience and make suggestions on working with young people.

*In your discussions you may wish to consider:*

- Welcoming and supporting young people
- What is young?
- It was felt that it is important to speak to schools and inform young people about alcohol, both for themselves and their families.
- In some countries it is difficult to engage with young people as the problem stays within the family and the church and they don't seek outside help.
- In some countries there are not many young people in AA as many people get sober through rehab centres.
- In many countries when young people do attend meetings it is attempted to get them young sponsors, but sometimes it is hard to help them stay in the program.
- Some countries have updated their websites and leaflets to appeal to younger people.
- Some delegates interviewed young people in their countries and found that they would like to have the opportunity to meet other young members between meetings. Facebook was often used to do this.
- Service was suggested to encourage them to stay and to connect them with other members.
- Other young people interviewed wanted to be treated no differently than other members, and felt it was important for other members to 'just be themselves'.
- The program is for everyone and people will come to AA when they are ready.

- Young people's Groups
  - Many countries have young people's groups and often these were late night meetings.
  - Some countries did not have enough young members for specific groups.
  - Some countries felt that specialist groups for young people were not a good idea as they had no specialist groups at all in their countries. Other countries thought that as long as they were non-restrictive specialist groups were useful.
  - In one country a young people's meeting was set up to encourage young people into service, and young people could sponsor and 12<sup>th</sup> step each other.
  - It is important to share experience no matter what your age.
- 
- Young people passing the message
  - In some countries there are not enough young people to carry the message.
  - All countries give talks to schools and most use a younger member along with an older member to do this. The younger member shares and the older member gives information about AA.
  - Whenever public information work is done it is important to find people who the audience can relate to.
  - One country has developed a DVD which is used in schools.
  - It was felt to be very important to pass the message of AA to young people so that they know where to find help if they need it. Information is important.
- 
- Cross addiction
  - Cross addiction was common in all countries and many countries found it happened more often in young people.
  - Some people with cross addiction stopped using other drugs when they stopped drinking as alcohol was their primary addiction.
  - Sometimes people use AA for other addictions.
  - In other countries members with cross addictions were encouraged to seek help with their other addictions, for example Cocaine Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, but people are not stopped from attending meetings.
  - In one country cross addicted members cannot do service.
- 
- Ethical and legal issues of working with young people
  - Most countries have no experience of the ethical and legal issues as they do not have many members under 18, but would deal with any issues when they arise.
  - It was felt that common sense should be used, for instance not 12<sup>th</sup> stepping alone and involving parents/guardians wherever possible.

- Co-operation with government initiatives
- Many countries have contact with professionals but very few have specific contact with government initiatives.
- An agreement was signed between the Prison Service in Spain and Spanish AA to enable groups in prisons across the country.
- It was felt that whenever anyone calls for help, including the government, AA should try and answer within the traditions.

Select a theme for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop.

The Committee selected 'Is AA Working?' as the theme for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop.

Elect a Chairman and Alternate for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop

The Committee elected Ingrid dS, Italy, as Chairman of the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop on the theme of 'Is AA Working?', and Lotte R, Austria, was elected as Alternate.

## WORKSHOP: "HOW TO ATTRACT & RETAIN YOUNG PEOPLE IN AA"

Chairman: **Bjorn K** Norway

Alternate: **Robert VB** Malta

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Ivo d'H	Belgium (Flemish)	Robert BB	Malta
Marc B	France	Piet van Z	Netherlands
Erkki H	Finland	Alunia D-K	Poland
Geoff H	Great Britain	Vladimi E	Russia
Pat B	Ireland	Nina B	Slovenia
Ilze K	Latvia	Reine J	Sweden

The Chairman opened the meeting with the Preamble and welcomed the delegates who were invited to introduce themselves.

Share experience and make suggestions on how to attract & retain young people in AA.

The question was asked: 'What is a young person?'

- Some meant school people up to the age of 20, others those substantially younger than the average member.

Use of the Internet

- The internet is of vital importance
- Separate page / section on the website for youngsters
- Adapted website for use on smartphones
- Attractive websites
- The first contact with AA

Where can we reach young people

- Schools – however, be careful
- Young offenders institutions
- Prisons
- Medical and psychiatric institutions
- Rehabilitation centres

### Attracting young people into service

- Through sponsorship
- Young to young
- Change AA's appearance on Google
- Build up a committee for youngsters
- Produce younger peoples' clips
- Let the young do what they are good at (apps)
- Get the young involved in PI committees and as observers and secretaries to conferences

### "Too young".... how to respond?

- You are never too young to come to AA
- You are never too young to stop drinking
- There is a need to redesign our literature and create new pieces of literature so that the young can identify
- Share your own experience from the time when you were their age
- Talk about the damage to your life
- Concentrate on the similarities (everyone will recognise emotions)

### Identification .... sharing the similarities

- That's how AA works - by identification
- Youngster to youngster
- The road to alcoholism is very similar regardless of your age
- Cross-addictions
- Share feelings emotions and fears
- It is easier to identify if you are the same age
- Youngsters talk about youngster's things

### Literature/Media

- Common use of pamphlets
- Get the young to write articles about themselves
- Our literature and programme apply to all ages
- Need to re-design some materials directed at young people, with a view to identifying with the programme
- Create movies for publicity
- Possible creation of a committee from amongst service people



- We don't need to re-design AA, but just some materials to make it easier for young people to pass the first hurdle

Select a theme for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop.

The Committee selected 'Help Newcomers' as the theme for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop

Elect a Chairman and Alternate for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop

The Committee elected Nina B (Slovenia) as Chairman of the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop on the theme of 'Help Newcomers', and Alunia DK (Poland) was elected as Alternate.

## WORKSHOP: "UTILIZING THE SERVICE STRUCTURE, A WAY TO CARRY THE MESSAGE WITHIN AA"

Chairman: **Piotr H** Poland

Alternate: **Helle V** Denmark

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Maxim S	Belarus	Alica B	Slovakia
Michal S	Czech Republic	Sasha Ana Z	Slovenia
Bjarne T	Denmark	Angeles UL	Spain
Penny A	Great Britain	Gunnar M	Sweden
Einar J	Iceland	Martin S	Switzerland (German)
Gita T	Latvia	Mikhailo A	Ukraine
Ad S	Netherlands		

The Chairman opened the meeting with the Preamble and welcomed the delegates who were invited to introduce themselves.

Share experience and make suggestions on utilizing the Service Structure to carry the message within AA.

### Here are our thoughts:

- It's my responsibility to do service, it keeps me sober
- Being sponsored into service by someone who is experienced and by reading positive articles on service
- There are not enough AA members wanting to participate in service, for example: due to issues with trust
- It's very important that service people communicate back to their groups, intergroups and regions about what they have learned
- Attending other meetings in others' areas and sharing experience is important
- Intergroup organised events for example: conventions, workshops and seminars
- Workshops dedicated to steps, traditions and concepts
- Make workshops for ex and current trustees
- It is important to sponsor new members to do steps and to do service

- Sponsorship in smaller towns is not working well due to trust issues. In such cases members will try to find sponsors outside of their town
- In one of the countries the GSB decide what articles go into newsletter
- Published leaflets are taken to schools, hospitals etc
- Electronic newsletters are available on websites and can be easily distributed via email, which is appreciated by our younger members
- One of the countries stopped publishing their newsletters due to lack of interest in writing articles
- It is recommended to have Non-Alcoholic Trustees on the board
- An opinion was shared that not all Dr's are adequately able to present ideas of AA being a Class A (Non-Alcoholic) Trustee
- It is important to have intergroups as an instrument to bring the groups together
- It is a good idea that intergroup chairs go and visit groups within their areas
- In one of the countries there is a suggestion that each of the trustees attend neighbouring regions conferences to share their experiences

Select a theme for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop.

The Committee selected 'How to carry the Message Outside AA.... in prisons, hospitals, schools etc' as the theme for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop

Elect a Chairman and Alternate for the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop.

The Committee elected Michal S (Czech Republic) as Chair of the 18<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop on the theme of: 'How to carry the Message Outside AA.... in prisons, hospitals, schools etc', and Gita T (Latvia) was elected as Alternate.

# **SHARING SESSION & CLOSING ADDRESSES**

## Sharing Session

### Presentations on the Theme: 'Service in Action, my Responsibility'

Jarmila K, Slovakia

My name is Jarmila and I am an alcoholic. I am grateful for the opportunity to take part at European Service Meeting. Thank you to everyone who made it possible. I don't take it for granted.

I come from Slovakia, a post-communist country in the middle of Europe. Very short time after the Velvet Revolution in former Czechoslovakia I left for Western Europe - to discover the big world of democracy and prosperity. The greatest discovery I made was about me. During my 5 years stay in Denmark, in a small, cellar AA room filled with smoke, I found out that I was an alcoholic and my life became unmanageable.

The difference between Slovakia and Denmark is rather obvious. Back at that time if I could choose only one thing to take with me back to Slovakia, it would not be the prosperity or the generous social system. It definitely would be AA. I lived in a city with 3 AA meetings per day. At that time there were 3 AA meetings per week in the whole Slovakia and no one with personal experience with live AA principles.

It was great possibility to serve and big responsibility too, but I wasn't grateful at all. If I could choose I would avoid this experience. I was afraid that I will die and I was full of self-pity. "Why me?" I felt too weak and too sick. I was the one to be helped, not the one to serve! After seven years abroad I moved to my parents' house. I was without job, my mother was dying and my father was drunk, social network almost nonexistent. I started on translation of the Big Book to save my skin and it worked. I didn't need the perfect conditions to do the service, the reverse was true. My conditions improved while I was concentrating on service. After a while I met another recovering alcoholic and we started an AA group in our town. It was again the service out of necessity. We needed a group badly.

When I heard the declaration "I am responsible..." for the first time I was truly moved. For an adult child of alcoholic it can be strongly appealing. I didn't know that something like over-responsibility could exist. At my home, one just couldn't do enough. After some experience with exhaustion and disappointment on "disgraceful" alcoholics I learned my lesson. I realized that AA exists in over 180 countries. Most of them I haven't even visited. It clearly proves that it can be done without me. Sooner or later there is always someone to take over if there is a message: "Of course you can do the job and you are welcome. I will not do it any longer."

It brought me a great relief and some humbleness too. Another thing I found out is that tendencies to avoid responsibility and to be over-responsible can be present even at the same time. None of them is good.

I still do my best to be active in service. The circumstances of my personal life are not so dramatic any longer; in fact they were never as harmonious and safe as they are now. It added a new motivation for my service - gratitude. Life became less painful and more joyful. Gradually there is more capacity to percept the world. I can see a lot of alcoholics and understand a bit how much they suffer. It gives me energy to do the service out of compassion, so they can be helped.

I said at the beginning that the greatest discovery I made in Western Europe was about me being alcoholic. The world of Alcoholics Anonymous is the greatest, the most significant and the most wonderful discovery of my life. It's a precious gift I didn't deserve but I would very much like to keep it. That's why I'm willing to serve as good as I am able to. Thank you my fellows for everything.

### **Martin S, Switzerland (German)**

Dear friends

My name is Martin, I'm an alcoholic.

I am glad to be invited to speak in today's meeting. Let me share some thoughts about doing services in AA today.

Very first I beg your indulgence concerning my language skills. English is not my native language and so you will probably get to hear some weird linguistic howlers.

In other words, I'm not a perfect speaker. But that's exactly what I do not have to be in AA. To serve in AA does not mean, to be the best, the most successful. It rather means to serve, to the best knowledge and belief. There are always plenty of experienced friends around, ready to help, if one doesn't know what to do next.

What I like to point out is, that doing services means not just to do a contribution to the community, but to grow myself.

As a drinking alcoholic, I was barely able to do my chores, as a matter of fact I was absolutely not able to take care of myself. Even the people around me had no chance. The alcohol had taken over the leadership and authority in my life. And he gave no one any chance to change anything. First I had to get sober, that any changes were possible.

All of us remember the time, at the beginning of sobriety. We were weak, often helpless, anxious, and hardly dared to do something. But at least we were willing to accept help. Help we usually first find within AA. Other people in our lives, if any are left, are overwhelmed. Or they lost trust towards us long time ago. AA was the place where I got what I needed, to survive my first time of sobriety.

AA was like a Supermarket for me at this time. And one of my friends pointed out: yes it is a Supermarket. Choose what you need, take as much as you need and leave what you cannot yet accept for the moment, e.g. spiritual things or whatever. Yes he is right – AA is a Supermarket and more than this. It is a Supermarket where you get everything for free. There are just some small mistakes in this thinking.

First, if I get everything for free in my life, I will lose any desire, any challenge. I am not made to live in the land of plenty. And I think nobody is, especially not an alcoholic. Satisfaction I get finally only through my own doing. This is my own experience, I always need a challenge and this is facing the everyday problems and to search for a solution. Just get everything for free makes not happy. The life in the land of plenty is more than dangerous. No more dealing with my own problems, no more to deal with other people and their weaknesses and whims, just having good days in a row, that's not real life. Or as Goethe mentioned: "Alles in der Welt lässt sich ertragen, nur nicht eine Reihe von schönen Tagen". "Everything in the world may be endured, except a succession of prosperous days".

Second. The biggest Supermarket will get empty one day, if nobody refills the racks.

After some months of sobriety I realized, that doing a service would help myself and the community. But what kind of service? Somewhere I read, to do something simple at the beginning. Emptying the ashtray after the meeting or brew coffee for the group. In my group nobody was smoking cigarettes during the meeting and nobody was drinking coffee. And I have not asked them, if they wanted to begin for my sake.

But I had just started to get my life in order. Therefore I disliked any form of true disorder. The bookcase and the storage cupboard of our group were a true showpiece of disorder. And so I offered the group to take care of these two items. This was my first service in AA and I did it so well, that still today the group gives me the honorary title of a "Deputy Librarian of the AA group St. Jean of Basel". Even last time, when I left for the European Service meeting, they reminded me: Come back and do not forget your main task, the chores you are made for.

As time was going, I felt more stable and self-confident. I started do other services. First I became member of the public information team. Later I took charge of the regional chairmen conference as chairman of this conference.

Doing services gave me a lot of power. As a drinking alcoholic I felt like a helpless new-born, or rather like a dying doter. Being sober, taking advantage of the AA program and finally giving something back to the society, gave me a sense of power and usefulness.

Doing services was part of this recovery. But like always, as an alcoholic there is a certain danger. I never get enough when something makes me feel good. And so I am endangered, like many of us, to do too many services at a time.

I needed some experience until I learned to do a challenging service and then to return humble to my position as a Deputy Librarian of the AA group St. Jean of Basel.

Being in so called leading positions within AA, and I think, taking part at the European service meeting is such a position, contains a big danger. Let me explain what I mean.

The AA program is a program that works. Proved by millions of sober alcoholics around the world. Being in a leading position contains the danger that we think we know to do better. In other words, one tries to adapt the program to what he think it's best, instead of adapting his live to the program.

We are easily seduced to tell others what and how they should do and we are easily disappointed if they don't. Our true alcoholic nature comes to light. And my own experience is, that these are the moments where I endanger myself most. Myself and my sobriety.

Coming to this point in doing services I always remember what is cited in "As Bill Sees It," page 138:

There it is mentioned that leadership as a service is divided into two classes known in A.A. slang as "elder statesmen" and "bleeding deacons." They are characterized as follows:

The elder statesman is the one who sees the wisdom of the group's decision, who holds no resentment over his reduced status, whose judgment, fortified by considerable experience, is sound, and who is willing to sit quietly on the side-lines patiently awaiting developments. The bleeding deacon is one who is just as surely convinced that the group cannot get along without him, who constantly connives for re-election to office, and who continues to be consumed with self-pity.

Let me finish this quote here. Picking up the term self-pity, as far as concerning myself, it is the worst poison against my sobriety. Maybe some of the bleeding deacons use self-pity as a substitute drug. Not me. Self-pity brings me in a similar condition as drinking. It leads me back to all my shortcomings. It makes me drunk without alcohol. The antidote are the 12 steps, first of all, the ones who deal with honesty. Honesty that forces me to accept that I am not the most important one in AA, the best knowing one on earth, or even the centre of the world. I am just a normal alcoholic, surviving in grace of a higher power that I found within AA and humbly ready to contribute through services. Best as a Deputy Librarian of the St. Jean group Basle.

Thank you for listening. Have a good time here in Frankfurt or like we say in Switzerland gueti vierzwänzg Schtund. Good 24 hours.



# Closing Addresses

## Ad S (Netherlands)

Hello dear friends from the ESM,

I am Ad, alcoholic, 2<sup>nd</sup> term representative from the Netherlands.

At first I will take you all to outer space. Maybe you will think: *"Has he gone mad after only two days of AA-ESM meetings?"* No, I remembered one of these days, an interview with one of the two astronauts from origin of the Netherlands.

Andre Kuipers, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dutchman ever to travel outside our beautiful earth had been asked the question: *"What was the most wonderful and fantastic experience you have lived whilst you were staying out there in outer space?"* His response was literally: *"When, one day, I looked from up there to that beautiful blue earth down there, I realized that I was looking to our mother earth and that there were no frontiers or borders on it."*

Approximately that feeling I have experienced and also hoped for during my first term at the 2011 ESM. The same good feeling I do have again in my 2<sup>nd</sup> term and I sincerely hope you share that with me. No frontiers on the map or globe and no frontiers in AA. We all have the same goal: living sober and help other alcoholics to reach that same good feeling. I thank AA from the bottom of my heart, having me dragged out of a miserable world full of frontiers and borders, which I had erected myself. What I needed was an open mind and AA gave me that.

Having lived a life of more than 20 years of alcohol abuse, having also stayed in 3 professional institutions for rehab at the edge of the ultimate downfall, that is death, and after a visit of my desperate eldest son I re-assembled myself, I thought for the last time, and contacted AA. It had been after the most horrible relapse I could myself imagine. Two or three weeks of only heavy drinking, without eating and other liquids, not answering phone calls, just going out with one goal... refill!

After having contacted AA two completely unknown people came to my house and told me about AA and their experience. I was as yellow as a canary bird and weighed a mere 60kg. I trembled and could not drink coffee nor tea. Half the cup stayed in and I could not drink the other half because my stomach protested that much. They convinced me to go to the meeting, which took place two days further on.

Those were two horrible days, but I made myself the oath already not to drink one glass evermore. Despite whatever excuse I could find, my book of excuses was full (1000 pages) and the volume that the almighty gave in litres or gallons of alcohol for my whole life, and with which he was very generous, had expelled until the very last drop. It was time to do business if I wanted to live on.

It took me almost a full year to get sober physically and then they asked me to provide service as a chair of the Friday group and at the same time I did service on group level I was taken to the region by my sponsor and only visited it twice. It took me another five years to visit the region again and after having visited it regularly I was asked to be chairman of the southern part of the Netherlands.

It has always been attractive for me to act on a European and/or world level within AA, but had to wait humbly, when the opportunity arose, and it came. The ESM has brought me an unforgettable experience and the desire to share this experience with all my friends in the Netherlands. I was so lucky to have been invited also to attend the General Service Conference in Paris last year and the General Service Conference in Belgium in March this year too. Thanks to my good friends in France and Belgium. It is with regret to have to consider that this might be my last ESM conference in Frankfurt/York, but I am confident that my successor Piet will do an excellent job.

I want to conclude with a typical AA humorous saying, which I have learned on the Dutch AA Convention this year and which may have been heard by some of you already.

*A guy came to AA and his sponsor said to him: I am not ok and you are not ok and that is ok!*

That has put us back on the ground again in a world without frontiers and with only one universal language, the language of the heart.

Thank you and hope to see you all in the future.

## **Marc B (France)**

Hello I am Marc from France, I am nervous but I'm sure I'm not alone in this situation! I am French, I told you about that and if you listen to my accent it is very clear I am French! I am 51 years old and am very happy to have the occasion to share my experience with you. First of all I would like to explain to you and to share how I came here.

Since I am abstinent I always had service and I was able to notice that service always allowed me to learn. I see a real profit with this coming back between the service and my life outside of AA. For example when I arrived in AA it was the 12<sup>th</sup> October 1994. I was a very emotional person, I had fear, shame and I was cross with me. It was really impossible for me to speak in public without a drink, really impossible. Now it is possible. Those eight years ago my work required that I speak in English, at this moment I did not speak practical English and I did not have occasion to speak English in France. But the real reason, the true reason, is I was very afraid by that, that was the reason. I think the French people have a problem with another language; I am not alone in this case!

During this time I was also very eager to visit the world. I made the decision to leave one month for holidays in India, alone. This first thing which I did was to look in this country if there was an AA meeting. Luckily there were a lot of groups in India. I was able to visit groups in Delhi, Rajasthan, and even at Dharamsala. That is the reason my accent is like this, because I learned in India! It was a pleasure to speak English every single time, I listened for words I didn't understand and in the evenings look in the dictionary in French. This experience was wonderful for me, really wonderful. Because I am alone in a country that was a stranger for me, a strange culture, a different culture and alone with my book, my Big Book, I bought the small one for weight, and my dictionary.

When I returned from this trip my fear had failed. I was able to speak English in my work without fear and without shame. I travel now in the world without fear. I learnt, a few years later that we looked for a European delegate. Not knowing this service I asked for an explanation from my sponsor. My sponsor, she was a girl, informed me that previously she had been world delegate, and that is the end of the story! She pushed me to take the service! I had already been a delegate to the French conference and I thought that I could be useful in this service. I am very, very grateful that they trust me this service. I participate in the service board in France during four years. It's a very hard job, it's very hard service because it's not every time easy, you know that! We had a lot of exchange with our friends from Belgium and from Switzerland. We invite to our conference the delegates from Spain, Switzerland, Poland and also the Dutch. This experience was very rich for me but it was also for the others which attended this sharing. For example, I remember I told you about Tomak from Poland, when he explained "we received 5000 people for anniversaries" the French people say "wow, 5000 people for the anniversary in Poland!" In France it is approximately 1500 and we are 50 or 65 million people in France.

I am more and more convinced of the importance of this exchange with our nearby friends. We learn from each other. For my part I am convinced that this service is a great level to reach which I have been allowed to have. This experience allowed me to break down the barrier of the language which we know in France. My meetings during these trips and this service reinforced my feeling of membership and this great movement which is AA.

Now I would like, I want to try to share two things. It is possible to change is the first one. Because when I stopped alcohol I don't imagine it was possible. I don't imagine a life without alcohol at this moment and now I am without alcohol. The second thing the service, it's very famous for change the life, and really I think it is possible to change.

Thank you very much.

## **Helle V (Denmark)**

Thank you Kristin for asking me to share my experiences as a delegate here in Frankfurt.

My first experience with service

I am, as you know, a second term delegate and it really has been a different experience for me being here this year, compared with my experiences in 2011.

When I came Friday I received the conference material and on the first visible page it was written relax and enjoy and it was repeated at the bottom of the page. Relax and enjoy. And that is what I have been doing.

And this is different compared to my first term where I was a little bit confused about everything and I really needed all the breaks to get my breath and heart with me. I have been talking to some wonderful people and I have felt the spirit of AA when it is at its best.

This year I have been able to listen and learn in a different way. I think Denmark in its effort to work with structure are somewhere in the middle compared with the countries represented here. Anyway it doesn't matter, it is not an important issue because I am very inspired from your sharings, whether you share from this or that country. I become able to remember again and again what is important, and that is good for me because I like to complicate things. So I am especially fond of the next theme, keep it simple

Especially I am always inspired when I meet people in service who are so sober that you can feel that they are living the programme. I meet that sort of people here and they give me hope that I can gain that kind of sobriety someday in the future.

Being here is like getting an injection of energy for service and for carrying the message out in the world.

Thank you so much everybody for making this possible for a drunk as me.

## **Rick W – International Desk, GSO USA/Canada**

My name is Rick and I am an alcoholic. I am sober today by the grace of God and the Fellowship of A.A. This is my first, and, because of rotation at our office, probably my only, European Service Meeting. Thanks to you for allowing Phyllis and I to be here from the General Service Office in New York; it is a privilege to be among such fine servants of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I'm happy to share some thoughts with you as this weekend draws to a close. This has been a fantastic weekend. Thanks to Angela, Roger and the staff at G.S.O. York for the fantastic job they do, much of it behind the scenes, so that you can do what you are here to do.

Tom B. of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, was a world service meeting delegate in the 70s. He used to share this quote that I want to pass along to you because it seems to me to tie in so well with the theme of this weekend "Carrying our Message through Service."

Tom attributed to Bill. I'll attribute it to Tom, because I haven't been able to find it in Bill's writings.

It goes "A.A. is not a personal success story. It is rather the story of our colossal human failure, converted to the happiest kind of usefulness by that divine alchemy, the living grace of God."

What is our message? Our A.A. message is about colossal human failure – overpowered by alcohol, we become failures—failures as parents, as children, failures as siblings and employees and citizens and finally, failures at living life.

Through A.A., this failure can be converted to the happiest kind of usefulness - not forced into a life of good works, but changed to happy usefulness. And not just happiness, but happy usefulness. And usefulness is service. The Big Book says we can laugh because we have recovered and been given the power to help others.

And the quote concludes “by that divine alchemy, the living grace of God”—the hand of God putting together people and events and circumstances, to bring about our gift of sobriety.

This weekend there were 39 delegates from 25 countries – all sober, a collective success story.

It was exciting to hear your country highlights, to find out about your successes and challenges. And to find out that there are Polish groups everywhere. Yes, in the U.S. and Canada, too.

In your country reports and workshops and committee meetings, it is wonderful to hear how you are using the internet to stay in touch with each other, and to make the A.A. message more widely available. This new mode of communication surely allows a path to reach newcomers, and especially young people.

In a Grapevine article from the 1960s, Bill talked about a “vast communication network” encircling the globe, what an opportunity it provided. Be he also reminded us that used selfishly or foolishly, it could do great harm. Finding ways to help our members use this new tool in keeping with our Traditions is vital for A.A.'s survival.

Thanks to Martin and Jarmila for the moving presentations to start the sharing session, and everyone else who shared for their really touching stories. Both Martin and Jarmila talked about the power of being of service, how it can help reverse self-pity. A wise Al-Anon woman I knew used to say “*Service is Gratitude in Action,*” and I heard that echoed in your sharing last night as well.

In my room last night, I read the reports of the sharing sessions. It was encouraging to hear your thoughts about carrying the message to young people.

How do we keep young people? We can do what my group did. I got sober when I was 20.

They welcomed me and took an interest in me. They didn't decide whether I belonged, whether I had suffered enough. They let me hear what A.A. had to offer, and let me decide if A.A. was for me.

They shared their stories. They let me know what they were like at my age, at that stage of alcoholism, and that showed me that, over any considerable period of time, for us, drinking gets worse, never better. They used to say being alcoholic is like being pregnant, you either are or you aren't. It's just that the further along you are the more it shows.

I showed an interest in staying in A.A., and they shared with me how we recover from alcoholism. Then they gave me something to do, they made me a part of. They let me be useful.

So let's do the same for newcomers, young or old. Hand them a broom or a chair or a dirty cup. Let us help people participate in this happy usefulness right away. So many of you shared your story of getting exposed to service early in your sobriety.

Now we can demonstrate for newcomers that in A.A. we do service for fun and for free.

This weekend, I have heard how the ESM fulfills its purpose, working as a forum for you to explore expanding services and create sound service structures. You shared terrific information in your committees about how you can better serve as E.S.M. Delegates, and keep lines of communication open among your countries. Each of you is an A.A. leader in service, with a responsibility to go and share what you have seen and heard this weekend. Hopefully, the experience you bring home will be heard in your country and your structure.

Service in A.A. can be a joy, but it is not always easy. It takes time and effort. I have seen a wonderful A.A. spirit of sacrifice and service in this room this weekend. This has been a room of equals, sharing with each other. Whether from mature structure or from one more newly established, each voice has had the opportunity to be heard. Those with more time and experience in service have shared how their structures work and how they have come to be in their present shape and function. Newer structures have shared their enthusiasm and open-minded exploration of new ways to do things.

Our A.A. principles don't change. But in order to apply the Traditions to new situations, we may need to change, ourselves and our structures. This is the essence of growth.

Whether it continues to meet here or transitions to York, I am confident that the European Service Meeting will continue to play a vital part in the growth of A.A. in Europe, making sobriety available to alcoholics near and far, whatever their nationality or language.

I am honored to be here with you this weekend.

Thank you.

## **Kristin L (Norway) – Chair of the 17<sup>th</sup> ESM**

Well, this meeting is coming to an end and just now I am deeply touched again. I will say some words just to wrap up the meeting. I would like to thank again Roger and the staff from the European Information Centre because, as I have said before, there is a lot of work in-between and in my opinion they are very professional and working with them is such a pleasure. It comes down to the small details like in my documents there is extra sheets to write on, I don't lack anything, so I think we should give them applause!

And of course also I would thank Rick and Phyllis so much for coming all the way from GSO, New York, as the manager of the General Service Office and as the representative for the International Desk. You've come all the way here to observe and to contribute with information and your knowledge and stay several days away from home so I really appreciate that and I'm sure all of the others do as well.

To all of you, thank you for the trust and for letting me have this bonus trip! It has been a real, real pleasure. When you started to arrive on Friday, someone I knew from before, many of you came here for the first time, kind of nervous, kind of shy and I was so happy to just be watching, how quickly you became a group. How quickly you started to get friends. How quickly you started to talk, smile, walk around and stand up to share – take the microphone. No one denied to come up here, you could have done you know! But everyone came up here so you made this meeting such a good meeting and all the good work which, for my sake I will use the reports when I come home because there is a lot of stuff in there.

And I would also thank the people who are going to serve at the next meeting.

The one thing and I was touched so many times, but the one thing that really made me cry yesterday, and that I think tells it all is Jarmila's speech. The way you explained the motivation to do service, how you started with having fear, put of necessity, going to gratitude and how you now do service with a passion for the still suffering alcoholic. I thought that I would mention that because it really summed it up for me and it touched me, so much being able to be sober in a country where everything was there for me.

I have been to several conferences and every time I feel like an injection of energy, new friends, ideas and having all these ideas I'm going home and I have learned during the years that for me it works by picking one thing. What is the one thing that's in my power to complete when I come home? Shall it be to translate and print an article in the magazine? Should it be a suggestion for the next conference? Should it be my way of acting on the internet? Should I change my attitude about young people? I have already picked one. I picked it because I know I'm passionate about to actually realise it, to make it real. That would be what Helle talked about. So I'm going to start to invite women to join a group for education on the Traditions. Because I know that I will do that, I'm passionate about it and I will finish that, make it real. So that's how I'll do it. So I encourage you all to pick one thing that you can, and will, bring back and actually do.

So I will just say have a safe trip home and I have had a lot of use from the email group, which you will all be part of. It's a very, very useful tool. You will be part of the email group for the European Service Meeting and there you can post questions to the other countries and get useful answers back. So I will see you there! Thanks you very much and we will close this meeting with the serenity prayer.