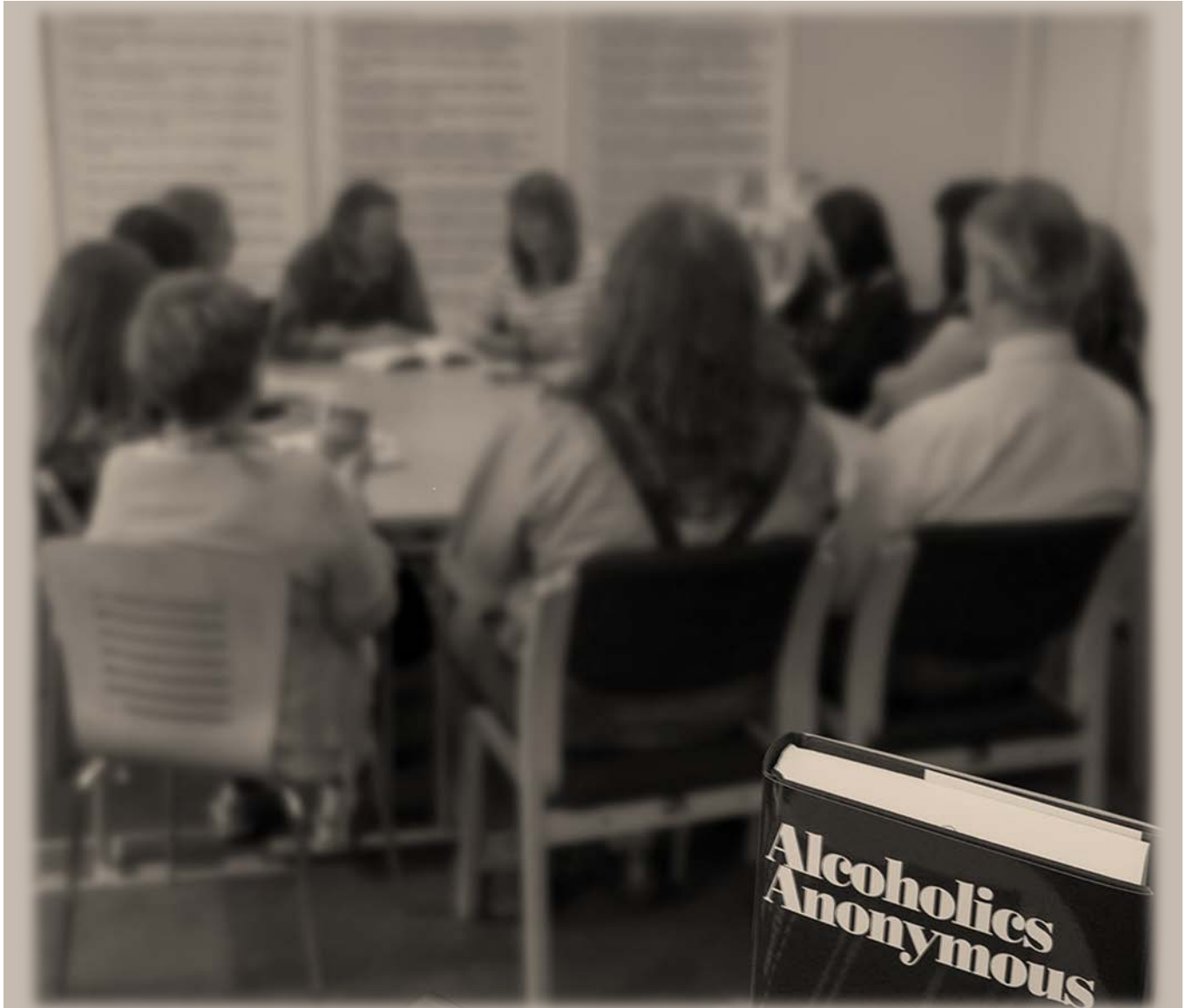


18th European Service Meeting 2015



Keep it Simple

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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

Delegates from 24 European countries representing 24 separate National AA Structures gathered together at the Park Inn Hotel in York, Great Britain on the 16th to 18th October 2015, to take part in the 18th European Service Meeting (ESM).

The European Information Centre at York issued invitations to General Service Offices across Europe, and listed below are the countries which attended this 18th ESM.

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

On Friday afternoon registration and reception took place, this provided an ideal opportunity for the delegates to renew friendships and to meet new friends who were attending the 18th ESM for the first time.

The 18th European Service Meeting was opened by the ESM Chairman – Penny A (Great Britain), who presented an opening address which was inspirational and uplifting, thus setting the mood for the whole of the weekend. Everyone was invited to introduce themselves. Penny then went on to welcome all of the delegates, Roger B - The General Secretary from Great Britain, Greg T – The General Manager from GSO New York, Mary C from the International Desk, and all of the ESM staff, following the reading of AA’s Twelve Traditions by Lubomir B (Slovak Republic), the Presentation of the 23rd World Service Meeting was given by Lotte R (Austria), this was followed by the Keynote Address which was presented by Mary (GSO New York).

A brief report concerning the finances of the ESM was given by Roger.

Finally, one delegate from each of AA’s national structures was then invited to share brief highlights of activities which had taken place in their country since the last ESM in 2013.

On Saturday each of the committees and workshops went into action, with delegates working together and sharing their wide and varied experience in service as it applied to each of their individual AA structures.

Each committee and workshop Chair reported back on all recommendations and final outcomes to the full meeting on Saturday afternoon (Committees) and Sunday morning (Workshops).

Saturday evening allowed a little time for relaxation with the Sharing meeting. Presentations were given by Alica B, (Slovakia) and Mike G, Switzerland (French Speaking) on the Theme: "Keep It Simple", this was followed by general sharing around the room.

On Sunday morning business concerning the 18th ESM was conducted. Following elections we were delighted to welcome Michal S (Czech Republic) as Chair of the 19th European Service Meeting to be held in 2017.

Jürgen R (German Speaking Europe) is to prepare and present a report on this 18th ESM to the 24th World Service Meeting (WSM) which will take place in 2016, he will then report back on the 24th WSM to the 19th ESM in 2017.

The Agenda Committee for the 19th ESM will consist of the following:

Michal S (Czech Republic)	Chairman of 19 th ESM
Rita M (Italy)	Chair – Service Committee
Kornelija Z (Latvia)	Chair – Recovery Committee
James O'B (Spain)	Chair – Unity Committee

The Agenda Committee will meet in July 2016 to discuss all questions forwarded to them via the EIC up until June 2016. The programme of the 19th ESM will be finalised and the agenda set.

To finalise the weekend closing addresses we given by Seamus (Ireland), Gita (Latvia), Gunnar (Sweden) and Mykhailo (Ukraine), all of whom recalled their feelings with positive emotion, some recounting their experience over the weekend and others their years leading up to this ESM.

Greg from New York made a closing presentation which was heartfelt and engaging, about his early days in the AA Fellowship, his life since and his thoughts about the weekend past.

Lastly, Penny our ESM Chair, went on to close the 18th European Service Meeting with a wonderful address, expressing great hope as she looked forward to the future of Alcoholics Anonymous across Europe, and around the world.

As there was a little time to spare at the very end, Penny invited a delegate from each of the countries to come up to the lectern and share the Serenity Prayer in their native language, culminating in the full circle around the room to close with the Serenity Prayer in English.

Agenda Digest of the 18th European Service Meeting 2015

Friday 16th October

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

Saturday 17th October

Committee Meetings
Questions and Answers Session
Workshops
Presentation & discussion following Committee Reports
AA Sharing Meeting on the theme: *'Keep It Simple'*

Sunday 18th October

Presentation & Discussion Workshop Reports

19th European Service Meeting

- Time and Place
- Election of Chairman
- Election of ESM Delegate to prepare ESM Report for WSM 2016 and report back to the 19th ESM in 2017
- Formation of the Agenda Committee

Closing Addresses
Close of 18th European Service Meeting 2015

Opening Presentations

WELCOME ADDRESS – KEEP IT SIMPLE

Chairman – Penny A – Great Britain

My name is Penny and I am an Alcoholic.

Hello Everyone.

First of all I would like to welcome you all to this new venue for the European Service Meeting here in York and a special welcome to the 1st year Delegates. I hope your journeys went well and you are settling in and finding your way around the hotel. If you need anything please do ask; the staff and I want to make your stay a comfortable and enjoyable one. We do a lot of work at these meetings, but we enjoy ourselves too and as recovering alcoholics, it is important that we are comfortable whilst we work!

I am so happy to be here.....I feel privileged to be chairing this the 18th European Service meeting and the first to be held here at the Park Inn in York. The meeting has grown and developed over the years – we outgrew the venue in Frankfurt, we have developed the format – we are a self-supporting group that works, grows and develops together.

We abide by our tradition of rotation which means some of us have been to the ESM before, and for others of us it is a new experience. But this, the 18th ESM, is new to us all, and it is us, those of us here tonight who will work together and share our experience to give us all something of value to take back to our Groups and our Countries. And not least of all, the experience, the efforts we have made to get here and will make during the weekend, will enhance our own sobriety and dig us deeper into this Fellowship making us and the Fellowship stronger.

Yet as we grow and develop, we must remember, for ourselves and as a Group, to Keep it Simple, the theme of this year's meeting. It is so easy to complicate things, to get tied up in knots, turning this way and that for a solution, looking for new ways of doing things.

As AA grows and the world changes, we need to change with it. We need new solutions to new problems, new techniques to communicate and reach out in today's world of ever evolving technology. But we do not need to change fundamentally, fundamentally we have our solution, we have our roots, the programme of Alcoholics Anonymous, our Steps, our Traditions and our Concepts. They are here with us to support and guide us as we go about our work this weekend.

I have sat in service meetings in AA where we are going around in circles getting nowhere trying to find the best way to sort something out, and then a voice comes in from a quiet member in the corner reminding us of what we are trying to do, in all service at all levels, our primary purpose is to help the still suffering alcoholic and the best way to do that is to keep it simple!

And at other times, a problem arises and we look this way and that..... and then the wise one of the day, (we are all wise sometimes, but we are not all wise on the same day!) said, look at the Traditions, look at the Concepts – and there is our solution – the guidance is there, and that is simple, it is already done for us!

When I came into Alcoholics Anonymous all those years ago to an English speaking meeting in the South of France, I was at the jumping off point, I could no longer live with alcohol nor could I live without it. The three people in that meeting shared their experience with me and I knew from their sharing that they had been where I was that evening. But they looked and sounded good. I resented them for their happy faces, their bright eyes, but I went back, I had nowhere else to go, I was hopeless and lost. In those early meetings, I do not know what I was expecting but what I got was simple one line phrases: 'don't pick up the first drink and you cannot get drunk', 'keep coming back', 'it's the first drink that does the damage', 'one day at a time'. Everything I asked, all the life problems I complained about were responded to with one of these simple phrases and I got frustrated and cross, but I kept coming back.

The people in my early meetings had gone through this process before me, they did not try to sort out my life for me, they just told me how they had, through the programme of AA, learned to live one day at a time without a drink and how life had, little by little, improved as a result.

And so, thanks to those people and all the members of Alcoholics Anonymous worldwide past and present, I can live today, one day at a time, without a drink, provided I keep close to AA and remember to keep it simple, don't pick up that first drink and whatever problems I have in my life will resolve themselves with help from my friends in AA and the God of my understanding.

We are all here this weekend to serve Alcoholics Anonymous, to give back what has been so freely given to us, our hearts must be in the right place or we would not be here. We want what is best for the Fellowship, for our members back at home and for those yet to come. We will discuss and share, throw ideas back and forth both in our meetings and over coffee. And in all that let us remember for ourselves and for others, to 'Keep it Simple'.

I leave you with the quote from AA Comes of Age page 214:

A few hours later I took my leave of Dr Bob.....The wonderful old broad smile was on his face as he said almost jokingly 'Remember, Bill, let's not louse this thing up, Let's keep it simple!' I turned away, unable to say a word. That was the last time I ever saw him.

Have a wonderful weekend.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS – Keep It Simple

Mary C – International Desk, G.S.O. U.S./Canada

My name is Mary and I am an alcoholic. I am sober today by the grace of God and the Fellowship of A.A. I bring you warm greetings from your friends at the General Service Office for the U.S. and Canada in New York; it is a privilege and an honor to be invited to address you at this, the start of the 18th European Service Meeting.

I came to A.A. beaten by alcohol and alone, having reached not a bottom but a black hole of despair. I was out of ideas, out of plans, mystified as to why I couldn't stop drinking, so I was willing to follow A.A.'s simple suggestions, the Twelve Steps. Simple? Yes, but not easy!

As the fog began to lift, I discovered that magical bond that develops when one alcoholic shares with another. I acquired a sponsor and became aware of actions to maintain my sobriety. You recommended, for example, that I start each day asking a Higher Power to help me stay sober, to attend A.A. meetings regularly, to be helpful to other alcoholics, to start to work the steps, to thank a Higher Power at the end of the day for another day without a drink. Simple? Yes, but not easy!

In 1934 a hopeless alcoholic named Bill received a message of hope from his lifelong friend and drinking buddy, Ebby who had found a way out. Their simple talk over the kitchen table led to a final hospitalization, a spiritual awakening and his quest to carry this message of hope to others, not only maintain his own sobriety, but to be hopeful to other alcoholics.

For months Bill worked with other alcoholics but had no success until he shared what he had found with Dr. Bob. In the summer of 1935, the two alcoholics were desperately attempting to stay dry and to share our message of hope with other alcoholics. Bill W. and Dr. Bob realized it was crucial for them to help others find a way out. Their efforts led to the recovery of A.A. number three, "the man on the bed." Early A.A. meetings were held at home, at the kitchen table, with lots of coffee. By word of mouth the good news spread: that recovery depended on honesty, admitting one's own defects, making amends for harms done to others, working with others, and prayer.

The contrast between then and now is astonishing. In the Grapevine article entitled "Let's Keep it Simple," Bill W. wrote in 1960: "Has A.A. really stuck with Dr. Bob's warning, 'Let's keep it simple'? How can we reconcile our current Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, General Service Conferences and international

meetings with our original 'coffee and cake A.A.'? As for me, I don't find it hard. Today, I think, true simplicity can be found in all the principles, traditions and services that lastingly ensure our worldwide harmony and effectiveness. So it was better to outline our principles rather than to leave them vague; better to clarify their application than leave them unclear; better to organize our services than to carry them out haphazardly or not at all."

Today as never before, we are moving away from the modest beginnings of our beloved community. Each of us bears the responsibility of remembering our pasts and taking on the future of A.A. Our lives and the lives of those who come after us depend on our ability to work together in harmony, to guarantee that our message of hope remains simple and clear.

A.A. groups, my home group and yours, bear the highest responsibility and final authority over our world services, those special bases of the Twelve Steps or Services that make it possible for our community to function as a whole. For this highest responsibility we also need to deeply respect and unconditionally trust in our principles as expressed in the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for World Service.

When I was new in A.A., finding and trusting a power greater than myself was a challenge for me. The group offered me hope and the assurance that we had to trust the "power greater than myself" that I found in my group.

The principle of A.A. unity was essential to my being able to stay sober. I began to understand why the Twelve Traditions were originally called the "Twelve Points to Secure Our Future." Today these simple principles lead us in our efforts to maintain unity, a responsibility that you and I see as a matter of life and death.

This gathering is to discuss important matters for A.A. in Europe. Each of you will look long into your hearts and minds to bring the will of a Higher Power to contribute to your discussions. Let's remember Bill's words in "A.A.'s Legacy of Service": *"Our Twelfth Step – spreading the message – is the basic service that the A.A. community performs; it is our main purpose and the most important reason for our existence. So A.A. is more than a bundle of principles; it is a community of alcoholics in action. We must spread the message, otherwise we may wither and those who are not given the truth may die."*

Our experience has taught us that simplicity is basic in preservation of our personal sobriety and helping those in need. To quote from the Big Book, "In spite of the great increase in the size and the span of the Fellowship, at its core it remains simple and personal. Each day, somewhere in the world recovery begins when one alcoholic talks with another alcoholic, sharing experience, strength and hope."

I am very grateful for this opportunity to be here with you at the 18th European Service Meeting. My heart is full of gratitude to Alcoholics Anonymous and to each of you. May our Higher Power bless all of you and Alcoholics Anonymous.

Thank you!

Presentation of the 23rd World Service Meeting

“The Three Legacies: Vital for all Generations”

The 23rd WSM was held from October 12 – 16, 2014 in Warsaw, Poland

Lotte R, Austria – World Service Delegate

The World Service Meeting Statement of purpose says, that... “The primary purpose of WSM is the same as that of all A.A. Activity – to carry the message to alcoholics who suffers, wherever in the world 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 every two years from all parts of the world. It can also represent an expression of the group conscience worldwide...”

The meeting started Sunday afternoon with the registration and reception and welcome of the delegates and the traditional Red Ball Meeting. I got the red ball first, had not time to be nervous, shared, and could enjoy the rest of the meeting quite relaxed. After sharing in an A.A. meeting I have immediately the feeling to be “at home”.

Dariusz P , the chairperson of The General Service Board of A.A. in Poland opened the Meeting and welcomed 61 delegates, representing 41 countries or zones. Dariusz expressed the joy of the Polish Fellowship at hosting this meeting. For the first time, the Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Iran and Romania were represented. Simultaneous interpretations were provided at all plenary sessions in English and Spanish, and this year also in Japanese, Polish, and Russian.

Manuel C of Chile gave the Keynote Address and he shared his experience of important points pertaining to our 3 Legacies. He stressed starting with what he called the “Basics”: “To always respect, practice, and put into action the Three Legacies; to keep doing sponsorship service at all times, as it is a ‘conveyor belt’ of the living memory of the Legacies; to completely develop the service structure and keep it going based on the Service Manual and the Twelve Concepts; and to permanently attract members to service”.

Phyllis H, General Manager of the General Service Office, reported on the International Literature Fund, which was established at the 11th WSM to provide start-up literature for those countries unable to finance by their own.

Thanks to Phyllis and Rick W for the perfect organization and their chair.

During the meeting, one delegate from each country or zone gave a short (or sometimes longer) report of the highlights – this includes A.A. histories, information on current structures and activities...

Ali of Iran reports about their strict Islamic laws, so their name is Nameless Sobers instead of AA and meetings are often held outside with temperatures between -15 to 40 °.

Shrikanth of India gave us an interesting report of a country with 35 languages, 1.2 billion people. The BB is translated in 13 languages.

In addition, delegates reported from the Zonal Service Meetings:

- Sharon of Australia about the 10th Asia-Oceania Service Meeting in Irkutsk
- Lotte of Austria/GS Europe about the 17th European Service Meeting in Frankfurt
- Pedro of Mexico about the 18th Meeting of the Americas (REDELA) in Ecuador
- Warren of South Africa about the 6th Sub-Saharan African Service Meeting

In the next four days we were working in the **Committees and workshops**.

World Service Meeting recommendations set policy for the WSM itself, and are not binding on any participating country.

Agenda

The committee reviewed and made no changes.

The committee recommended the theme for the 24th WSM:

“One World, One A.A., One Language of the Heart”

They recommended **presentation/discussion topics**

1. Country-to-Country-Sponsorship,
2. Without Frontiers: Many Languages, Many Cultures, One Unique Message,
3. From Recovery without Ego and Pride Comes True Leadership,
4. The A.A. Home Group: The Spiritual Foundation of our Recovery,
5. A.A. Service and Spirituality,
6. Fellowship (The Meeting after the Meeting),
7. Social Media in A.A.

...and the Workshop topics:

1. Resentment: What Does It Mean for Individual Recovery and for Group Survival?
2. Communication between the Generations: Are We Succeeding in Carrying the Message?
3. The Spirituality of Our Financial Contributions.

Literature/Publishing

The committee changed item 3 "incoming delegate" to "first-term-delegate", the committee accepted the AAWS Report on the International Literature Fund.

The committee discussed different topics like the use of surplus revenue from literature sales, including sales to outside entities, to support A.A. service activities, the experience on the impact of reducing literature prices, about a group conscience on the translation of A.A. literature, the use of E-book, social media, mobile apps, text messages and other new media, of downloading A.A. literature from the internet.

The structures have recognized the growing importance of using digital material and new media to the younger members, and are seeking ways to utilize these formats

Policy/Admissions/Finance

The committee approved requests for participation at the 23rd World Service Meeting of Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Iran and Romania.

The committee reviewed qualifications for countries and delegates participating WSM, the WSM finances and delegates fees. The committee's discussion centered on two strategies: increasing income, and reducing expenses. The committee recommended that the delegate fee be increased to \$ 1,500 for the 24th WSM. Concerning cost of accommodations, we have to keep in mind the facilities necessary to properly host the event. The committee did not agree with the idea of decreasing the frequency because of many negative effects.

The 24th World Service Meeting will be held October 23-27, 2016 in New York.

Working with others

The committee discussed and shared on following topics:

- Cooperation with Local and National Law Enforcement
- Cooperation with the Elder Community
- Online Meetings/Groups: Service Activity and the General Service Structure
- "...you cannot transmit something you haven't got."

The following workshops took place on the 23rd WSM:

- A.A. from 1935 to now – The 'Twelve Traditions Run Alcoholics Anonymous.
- When in a small community one doesn't find enough members to do service does the principle of rotation have to be ignored?
- Alcoholism and other addictions – 'I am an alcoholic and addict' said at the meetings. (Primary Purpose)

Between Committee Meetings, Country Highlights and Workshops, we "relaxed" in hearing very interesting and informal presentations, given by Second-Term-Delegates and could contribute after in the sharing-session about following topics:

- How to Use New Communication Technologies More Effectively
- The Lack of Trusted Servants and Today's Way of Life
- Anonymity and Social Networks
- Women in A.A. Groups and in Service
- How to Better Carry the Message to Young People
- Alcoholics Anonymous – The Language of the Heart
- Old People in A.A.

What is also important in A.A. – the Coffee Breaks! Where we continued to share, to discuss, to make new and renew friendships.

Dariusz of Poland has given the Closing Talk and after 5 days of very intensive work we closed the Meeting with the Serenity Prayer in 28 different languages.

Country Reports

AUSTRIA

General Structure

The German speaking AA (GSAA) in Europe consists of the Federal Republic of Germany and Austria and the German speaking part of Italy, South Tyrol. Austria and South Tyrol is one region of actually 12. The Austrian AA is organized by the legal association, named "AA Interessensgemeinschaft.V.", which is a non-profit organization. The business meetings are held twice a year, in spring for 2 days and in autumn for 1 day. Austria has 9 intergroups with regular Chairmen's Meetings twice to four times a year.

Number of Groups

At the moment there are 185 AA-groups in Austria with 185 meetings weekly, 13 of them in South Tyrol, 8 of them in English, 2 Polish and 1 Spanish. The 185 groups with approx. 2000 members flourish well. The English, Spanish and Polish speaking meetings are in Vienna, one in Salzburg.

Finance

AA in Austria works with the principle of the "overflowing hat" as usual. After paying all self-supporting expenses like rent, literature, etc., the leftover of the groups goes to intergroup, then goes the intergroup's leftover to the region, the still leftover is sent to the literature fund of the GSO in New York City in the name of GSAA. The actual financial situation seems to be stable, but it could always be better. We maintain in Austria our own GSO, that way we are officially listed internationally. We do not have a prudent reserve, all our work is done on a voluntary basis.

Services

Meetings in prisons, hospitals and detox-centers take place regularly. We also offer information meetings for young people in schools, together with members of Al-Anon and Alateens. All these relationships between AA and physicians, nursing staff, staff in prisons, teachers and officers in other organizations are very productive. In all our intergroups we have telephone service, but we have to learn, that the telephone is less accepted by the "new-comers" than inquiries by internet.

Conventions

In 2015 the GSAA-Convention was held in Salzburg, Austria. "Recovery in unity" was our topic! It was a great success! About 2900 members of AA and Al-Anon usually love to attend these conventions. We invited James W. S. from Akron, Ohio, who knew Bill W. in person, to speak at the opening session.

This year we organize a conference about the 12 concepts for the third time.

Literature

AA Austria uses the literature of GSAA.

Internet

AA-Austria has an own homepage: <http://www.anonyme-alkoholiker.at>, where we also have a web-forum for internal Austrian AA-purposes exclusively like communication, quick sharing of coming events, downloads of service material, etc. We have about 150 visitors a day on our homepage.

AA-Magazines

The general German magazine "DACH" is the magazine for GSAA. "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 friends are working for DACH, and many friends from Austria/South Tyrol send their contributions to this meeting in print.

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 corresponding countries.

Relationship to other countries

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

Public Relations

We place regular information about local AA-meetings, sometimes articles about alcoholism and AA, AA-connections and information in some local magazines. Our meetings can be found in the internet. We inform physicians, hospitals, detox-centers, prisons and schools regularly about meetings and give meeting lists, literature and flyers.

BELARUS

Conference

The 1st General Service Conference was held in Minsk in 2003, although AA initially appeared in Minsk in April, 1990. Since that time conferences have been held in October annually. Currently AA Belarus comprises ninety-two Groups, two Intergroups (one in Minsk and one in Grodno – two major regional cities of Belarus) and one Regional Assembly "Zapad" (West).

General Service Board

General Service Board consists of nine designated members - five Trustees from Minsk city and four Trustees from regions. The number of Trustees is regulated by the needs of the Fellowship. In 2010 the Conference made a decision to convert the General Service Board into the Board of Trustees. It also entrusted the Board with the responsibilities of supervising the official representative of AA Belarus - PO "Alcoholics Anonymous Central Service". At present the Board of Trustees consists of 9 members: six Trustees from the regions and three General Service Trustees who are also the Trustees of the PO "Alcoholics Anonymous Central Service".

Committees

There are currently two Committees: Public Information, International and Correctional Facilities. Other Committees are not working yet.

AA Belarus Service Center

In 2006 AA Belarus Service Center was registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus as a public organization. The Center has been employing an executive director and an accountant since. Over the last three years, due to increased rent prices, we had to move the Office twice. Groups' donations are barely enough to cover half of the Center expenses. Helpline calls are answered by volunteers around the clock. Those ready to 12-step are invited via e-mail.

Literature

In 2003 GSO (U.S./Canada) assisted us in acquiring AA literature in Russian for the establishment and the development of AA Fellowship in Belarus. Belarusian AA are grateful to everyone who responded to the call for help and did help for the period of three years.

From 2006 till 2014 we cooperated with the Russian AA Office in the publishing of AA literature. Last year AA Belarus got a license for the publication and distribution of AA literature in Russian on the territory of the Republic of Belarus.

We had hopes to receive the layouts from AA Russia but were refused. So we requested the layouts from GSO. And this year AA Belarus published its first 1000 paperback "Alcoholics Anonymous" in Russian. To do this a subsidiary publishing enterprise had to be launched as nonprofit organizations are not permitted to sell literature by Belarusian Law.

Finance

Lately we have seen rent prices rise immensely and personal contributions fall by 20%. Groups' Contributions alone are not sufficient to pay the Office rent. At present approximately 20% of our expenses are covered with group contributions and 80% with the proceeds from the literature sales.

BELGIUM - FLANDERS (DUTCH-SPEAKING)

Structure

The basic elements of the structure are the A.A. members gathered in the 332 groups (an equivalent of 413 meetings every week) widespread 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 37 titles of A.A. Conference-approved literature. The most recent was the translation of Dr Bob and the good oldtimers. 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 1900 copies.

Loners: The Loners Committee is a 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 40 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; one Class A (non-alcoholic) trustee from the province); two 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: two Class A trustees, nine A.A. members (two delegates from each province). One Class A trustee, two 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 March 2016, 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. In 2014 the Convention took place in the province of West-Vlaanderen, the theme "Unity, Service, Recovery". This year in May the convention was organised by the province of Oost-Vlaanderen, the theme "Living in sobriety is a festivity".

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

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 64 (8 more than in 2013) AA groups in the 43 cities (3 more than in 2013). There is also one registered Skype Czech-Slovak AA group included in overall number of groups. These figures are positively showing that we are growing. Membership counts approximately over 600 members.

Most of the groups are smaller, having only one meeting per week.

We would say that Sponsorship has noticed significant progress during last two years. It's getting to be more common but it's not on the same level like in western countries and as we would wish. Recently, there have been founded a few groups focused strictly on the study of Big Book and intensively working on steps.

General Service Conference

According to voices from groups, GSB has decided to gather the Conference only once in year, but for the whole weekend.

This format was applied for the third time At the General Service Conference in January 2015, we recorded the highest attendance in the history of Czech AA, 41 members that is the sign of growing common general responsibility within Czech AA community and also general awareness of AA as a whole community and its needs.

This year we have tried to follow 12 Concepts for World service as a principles of our conduct, mainly we used 5th Concept. Beside its effectiveness it was also rather confusing for most of the members, we need more experience in applying them correctly and simply.

Several new projects for Literature Committee have been approved as well as for PI activities.

General Service Board

Our Board serves effectively between annual GSC.

Since January 2014 we have our very first Class A trustee, a doctor working in treatment facility who is friend of AA for many years, she was and is helping us to open many doors to other professionals we could hardly get to ourselves, she has also represented us at some occasions. She is attending Board meetings, GSC and other AA events.

GSO

We still do not have proper office. On this year GSC decision was made to start looking for suitable and affordable place, possibly to be combined with storage for our increasing stock of literature. But at the moment there is no one officially fulfilling duties falling under Office as such. Volunteers maintain these services.

It seems the main reason we are still lacking GSO is financial restrictions and feel of need and use from general membership. However with our progressing growth and more literature in store, groups and members are beginning to see importance of an office.

Service Handbook

Another remaining issue is absence of AA Service Manual. Committee for this purpose was established several years ago but they are still struggling with the task. Committee has met only once in last few years and although they made some progress because of that without these regular personal meetings they are not moving forward. We would appreciate best practice sharing from other countries, where Service Handbook has been set up recently.

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 46 % are donations from group's seventh tradition and the rest is from income AA literature sales (the ratio in 2013 was 40/60, seventh tradition to income from sales of literature). But still less than half of the groups contribute to overall Czech budget even though we have recorded significant progress in this area.

Literature

"How Bill sees it" was published in November 2013. The publication "Daily Reflection" was published afterwards in July 2014. After GSO disapproval of the draft of translation of "Daily Reflection" (translation of professional agency) it was agreed that we will not use professional agency for corrections and it was decided to make the corrections by ourselves. The publication "Daily Reflection" was published afterwards in July 2014. The Brochure "12 Traditions Illustrated" has been licensed by GSO and subsequently published in September 2014. And one year later also Brochure "12 Steps Illustrated" was published (after licensing procedure) at the beginning of September 2015.

Work of extensive corrections of the Big Book was launched in the summer of 2014. We sent the 5th chapter according to GSO requirements in September 2014 and we have got the answer at the beginning of 2015 with answer that we should correct and adjust whole book. We are working intensively on these adjustments during these months.

We met GSO Literature Representatives personally in Atlanta at the International Convention in July 2015 and it helped us a lot to improve our common communication and cooperation.

Magazine

Our AA magazine "Cesta" is still published every third month. At the beginning of 2014 there was the rotation of the editorial board and new servants started to prepare it. The circulation is still 500 copies and every issue consists of 32 pages full of the stories of the personal recovery, provides the AA contact information and information about ongoing AA events and 12 steps workshops. We still stick to the rule set up by the magazine founders and provide the older issues to the treatment facilities for free

Public Information

The Commission for Public Relations has a new generation of servants and it appears that it has started to work very well both in communication via e-mail and via telephone as well. There are two telephone services for both, one for men and one for women.

The main topics for the years 2014-2015 were mainly Schools and Hospitals. Carrying the message in schools is very variable and differs from region to region in the country. Very positive response is usually noticed if the presentation is based on the AA format and recommendation. This part services in the Czech Republic is definitely improves.

AA cooperation with hospitals is rather big wish than a reality. In this respect, the greatest obstacles are regulations. The greatest successes in this area have been made by the group from Blansko region and can certainly draw a lot from their experiences (they created manual).

Carrying the message within the addiction treatment center is major service regarding to fulfilling the twelfth step. This service regularly donates most of the groups in the vicinity of hospitals and only in a few cases we cannot get to hospitals rather because of distance or reluctance or distrust of management institutes. One of the things that certainly help is visiting of Conference of Addictions. This is, we believe; improve awareness of AA among experts. The results of this cooperation are already definitely visible now. This conference is probably the biggest event in the Czech Republic.

The Commission visited Addictological Conference in 2015 (meeting with doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, Addictologist, outreach workers, people from contact centers, the attending medical staff, social workers, workers of crisis helpline and so on), where we were like AA present a 12th Steps program which among experts is virtually unknown.

They could try working on the Steps during Workshop, which we had organized for them as a practical part of our presentation.

At the end of the conference we were told that they hope we will meet more frequently and they appreciate our work.

Internet

Our mailing-list also so called non-stop AA meeting in form of email contributions on given topics and it is still very helpful tool within Czech AA Fellowship. 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 500 members from both Czech Republic and Slovakia, providing that way even broader range of shares.

There is a visible growth of Skype AA meetings noticed during last two years. They are running every day and it is Czech-Slovak cooperation again. Groups are officially registered and manage own website, which is very helpful for this kind of meetings, carrying the message of recovery program and work between the sponsor and the sponsee.

Young People in AA

For the first time in Czech AA history the YPAA conference has been placed and organized in Czech Republic, it was specifically EURYPAA in Prague 2014. As we hoped it has encouraged more (not only) young people to be a part of AA Fellowship and its Service and we could count more people of Czech AA fellowship in the EURYPAA Convention in 2015 in Rome (not only one or two). We have started to visit also other YPAA Conference across the Europe.

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

Structure

General

Our first Conference plan - and structure was adopted in 1986. Conferences have been held once a year ever since and more and more AA groups are represented through their delegates. We are convinced that this service structure helped us to stick together during these expanding years – and still does.

Meetings and Groups

As of today there are 439 meetings in our official meeting list. Recently a few groups have started having more than one meeting. Generally there are no distinguishing between meetings and groups. Six meetings are held in English, in three different cities. Two meetings are in Greenlandic language and four meetings are in Icelandic language. There is one Danish speaking meeting in Spain and three in Thailand. There are now 2 meetings on the internet in Danish language.

Regions

AA Denmark is divided into six regions. The groups elect Group Service Representatives (GSR) to meet at Region Service Meetings. The regions nominate two trustees each to the General Service Board (GSB). The regions also appoint a number of delegates to the General Service Conference, regulated by the number of groups in the Region. Some regions have not been able to send the right number of delegates to the Service Conference, the last few years.

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. And finally they seem to divide the work of the GSB representative and the chairman of the Region into two service representatives. Earlier the chairman of a Region automatically had the representation in the GSB.

General Service Board (GSB)

The GSB consists of, a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Treasurer a Secretary, and the Chairman for the Service Conference. In addition there are 12 trustees nominated by the Regions, and approved by the General Service Conference. The General Service Board has 17 members. All members are obligated to meet or send an alternate to the board meetings.

Currently there are no non-alcoholic members in the GSB. The Nordic Delegates have had a meeting in Norway with the subject: How do we use our friends in GSB? Still we haven't found the person or persons. The standing committees are represented by GSB once time a year. The board meets every three months at our General Service Office in Copenhagen or in one of the Regions. Once a year, GSB have a seminar with different subjects.

General Service Conference

The Danish General Service Conference is held each year in April. Our last conference this year, 2015, had 82 participants, 67 of whom were voting members. There was one observer from Sweden and we also had two observers from the UK.

The past 11 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 Service Conference Committee and people from the GSO, coordinate meets throughout the year and preparing the day before the Service Conference is started.

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

At a meeting in GSB we have recently decided it will be the best idea to send the Danish Vice Chairman of the Service Conference, to York. We can share experiences, strength and hope across the countries.

Beside our usual four working committees at our conference we have workshops too. The four committees are Media, Service, Economic and Visions. Like the British Conference 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. Literature sales, production and AA Data do their work from the GSO. Many Committees and the Copenhagen Region held their meeting at our GSO. We have not been able to find a treasurer for the last three years. There was a candidate this year, but he was not elected when the Service Conference were voting. We have decided that our Office Manager takes care of this function, as well. There are no paid workers at our Office.

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 is done only by non-paid AA members. Chairmen are appointed by the committees and all members are approved by GSB. The rotation period is four years.

Finance

In the 2008 Conference it was decided to build a reserve for 1½ years of expenses, calculated as an average of the expenses for the past three years. This has been practice for a long time, but was put into writing. We have decided that our reserve at present covers about 12 months of expenses. Over the last couple of years we have seen a decrease in contributions made to GSO both from regions and directly from groups. 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 literature committee is at present revising the Big Book and translating the Twelve Concepts. BOX 334 is our nationwide magazine, which has been circulated since the beginning of 1990s. It's now possible to pay with visa in our book shop. Most recently we released a revised version of 12 steps and 12 tradition and AA comes of age.

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. We have a telephone system which is connected to mobile phones so servants can answer from each part from the country.

The service is available seven days a week from 8 am to midnight. We have 11 people who answer emails, 60 people who answer questions from their home and 52 people who answering from the office. We do also have 376 members who are able to make a twelve step visit possible when they are contacted.

Because of the increasing number of emails to AA Denmark, 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. And the e-mails are growing in numbers. More and more schools and educations request us to give information about Alcoholics Anonymous. In our National Public Committee, we have had approximately 40 requests from schools, institutions and associations, this year. Almost every contact has been a request and a wish to have a visit from AA with speak or general information about AA.

Internet

Several years ago AA Denmark established a web site: 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 websites hosted by AA Denmark. A standing committee (IT) is working on policies for using the electronic media and now a working group with representatives from each region is established to give our website a facelift. The committee is also the safeguards for traditions and especially for the anonymity not being compromised on the internet.

Only conventions and meetings officially held by AA entities can be present in the online calendar.

The Big Book is available online.

All meeting agendas and minutes from GSB are published on the website. We have decided to follow the recommendations from WSM not to use the social media at the internet.

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. The convention is held in Denmark this year and it takes place in Allerød, the 18 -20 th of September.

The subject for the Nordic convention is: Happiness through service. More details is available at aalandsmode2015@gmail.com or at the web site www.aalandsmode2015.dk

We also seek to attend General Service Conferences in Norway, Sweden and Finland - and usually we send an observer 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 Meetings. We have had two delegates both ESM and WSM who had been taken decision to stop with service as delegates.

GSB have been taken their responsibility and action in this new situation. We have decided to have two international delegates who covered a period of four years. We are still trying to help Greenland through the process when it comes to translating publications.

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

Introduction

A.A. has been in Finland since 1948. Today we have ca 660 groups in 260 different locations. The total amount of members in these groups is estimated to be approximately 10,000.

The highest decision making body in the Finnish A.A. is the Annual Great Meeting of all Finnish A.A. groups, which elects and/or accepts the servants and delegates to A.A. Fellowship. These meetings gather 900 – 1500 visitors each year. This year the Meeting was held in the town of Lahti in April.

Every A.A. group in the country is entitled to send one delegate to the Great Meeting. Beforehand, all the groups receive an invitation to the meeting with agenda, budget, annual report and plan. Each group can also propose issues to the agenda and the Meeting handles all proposed issues.

Structure and Activities

The heart of the A.A. are the groups, which form 17 areas.

The Finnish A.A. is vital: the groups organize four open national conventions yearly. The members also arrange several smaller local/areal events in different regions. The groups do active 12th step work and cooperate closely with Al-Anon.

General Service Office at Vantaa employs two permanent and one part-time workers. Among other things like administration and communications, the office takes care for the update of the Fellowship's internet pages that have undergone a remarkable update during past few years.

The AA helpline, supported by the groups, covers the whole country and receives around 10,000 calls yearly. We also have weekly AA Radio Program – a direct broadcast to which people can call, which is available through our internet pages, too.

It has been said that as a non-English speaking AA country, Finland is very successful. We also have very odd tradition: we have a round table group, which means that everyone talks in the meeting.

Our financial situation is stable. The reserve covers six months expenses.

Finnish A.A. Service

The Finnish A.A. Service consists of the delegates (20) elected by the areas at the area meetings to serve for a period of two years. The Annual Great Meeting of Finnish A.A. groups confirms the final composition of the Finnish A.A. Service, which then chooses the chair and the secretary for the Service as well as the members of the committees among the delegates. The committees include: Policy and Admissions, Literature, International Affairs, Public Information, Institutions, and Carrying The Message.

We have also two independent committees: Prison-and Travel Planning committees. Finnish A.A. Service has ca eight meetings a year. The service as well as the committees has 5-6 meetings per year.

Publications

The Finnish A.A. Publishing Inc. is a legal entity and consists of six trustees who serve three-year terms. Meetings are held every other month. Group representatives select the trustees at The Annual Great Meeting. The main task of the corporation is to monitor and support the office and staff, and take care of legal affairs, contracts, finance, public relations, publishing activities such as copyrights and printing of A.A. literature

We publish two bulletins: "Ratkaisu" (Grapevine) and "Tiedotuksia" (Information).

"Ratkaisu" is published 10 times a year in 2000 copies (200 pcs more than last year) and it has articles and stories about alcoholism, written by both alcoholics and other stakeholders. Among others, the President and Archbishop of Finland have kindly given their input in the bulletin.

"Tiedotuksia" comes out every month in 2000 – 2500 copies. This bulletin is mostly an internal newsletter with information on events, anniversaries and memos of Service and Publishing Inc. meetings.

International activities

At the Annual Great Meeting of Finnish A.A, the groups choose WSM delegates who serve four-year terms, rotating in such a way that the starting delegate serves as a first-delegate while the older one serves as a second-term delegate.

Both delegates take part in W.S.M. and E.S.M. They do close cooperation especially with Scandinavian countries and Russia; communication with other countries occurs case-by-case basis.

Both WSD's report to Annual General Meeting, in other words to the groups, and their travel and other reports and overviews are published in our bulletins.

Today's challenges

Volumes in European AA are not big and in most countries we are facing the fact that the number of AA groups and individuals is decreasing – mostly because the population is aging rapidly.

The other reason for shrinking volumes is that people are nowadays not “pure” alcoholics but also addicted to some other drug. Very much discussion is going on about how AA should treat people with double addiction and is it in line with the 3rd tradition and the “Singleness of purpose”.

Most of the groups welcome alcoholics with drug addiction, but they are advised to talk about alcohol related issues in AA meeting and go to NA or similar meetings for help concerning other addictions. This is not always easy as in smaller villages and towns they do not have NA or even Al-Anon groups.

The third common tendency seems to be that people are not willing to take over service duties.

Due to above reasons also we in Finland have taken new actions thinking that AA must adjust to the ongoing changes. Thus social media, internet groups and skype meetings are used in many countries and e.g. in Northern Finland the social media seems to be the only rational solution to the fact that the nearest AA group may be located 300 kilometers away.

Social media and new forms of getting together and staying sober are very important especially for young people who have never read a written book. In many countries, also in Finland, young people have their own committees, brochures and social media sites. Once a year European young alcoholics have a big meeting – this year it will be in Rome in August. In Scandinavia we have our own SCANCYPAA – Scandinavian conference for young people in AA

GERMAN-SPEAKING EUROPE

Since the last Country Report in 2014 there has been no change in the general overall service structure. The fellowship in Germany, Austria with Southern Tirol, the German-speaking part of Switzerland and several groups in Belgium and Luxemburg is divided in 12 Intergroups: ten in Germany, one in Switzerland and one in Austria/southern Tirol. Each Intergroup serves two to eleven regional groups. Each regional group serves about 15 to 25 local groups.

The last German –speaking convention has taken place this year in Salzburg (Austria), the next one will be 2016 in Bremen. These conventions normally have about 3,000 to 4,000 in attendance.

Since our 34th GSC in 2014 has accepted a new Service-Manual: "Dienen in AA", we are occupied with realizing and living the changes in the service-structure resulting from this manual. Of course there are some difficulties, when we try to act in this new manner. But it seems that we are on a good way, improving our services in the sort of way given by the new manual. For the first time we have in German-speaking Europe a charter of the GSC which is a part of the new manual. This charter follows widely the US/Canadian Charter differing only in locally founded reasons.

Our GSC is held once a year, usually in springtime. It consists of elected delegates of each region, the members of the GSB and the WSM and ESM delegates. Six Conference committees develop suggestions upon which deliberates the conference as a whole.

The 34th GSC has decided that the Literature – Committee develops as soon as possible an improved German version of the Twelve Concepts.

There are some questions which are discussed actually in the fellowship and answers prepared by a committee created by and responsible to the GSB concerning the search of a new location of our GSO. Answers and solutions to the questions and arising problems in this field will be found step by step within perhaps the next year. Until then, our GSO will still remain in Dingolfing.

We also are discussing the embedding of Online-Groups into the existing service-structure of AA.

This discussion is continuing. A good solution is still not visible.

GREAT BRITAIN

Groups, Intergroups (I/G's) and Regional Assemblies

At the end of April 2015 there were a total of 5057 AA Groups registered with Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain), 668 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 4389 AA Groups.

The figures indicate that AAGB is still growing increasing by approximately 0.8% in 2 years. It has been estimated that there has been between 3 & 4 million attendees at AAGB meetings in the past 12 months.

Each AA Group is represented at its local I/G by a Group Service Representative. I/G's in turn are represented at their Regional Assemblies by Region Delegates. I/G's and Regions are geographically arranged, and there are 119 I/G's 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.

I/G's 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. These liaison activities are reported upon below.

General Service Conference

The Fiftieth General Service Conference was held in April this year, the theme being '*In the Spirit of Love and Service*'. The Conference comprised 94 delegates from the 16 Regions, 22 members of the General Service Board, Nicki W Conference Chair (Eastern Region), Roundabout Representative, Share Editor, General Secretary, 5 General Service Office staff.

Also in attendance were 11 Observers from Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia.

The main content of the Conference consisted of:

- A keynote address from the Conference Chair
- The annual financial report from the Fellowship's Honorary Treasurer
- Annual progress reports from various Trustees
- The six Conference Committees Chairpersons reports detailing the deliberations on the elected Questions for Conference which had originated from the grassroots of the Fellowship

These deliberations and recommendations were voted upon by the full Conference on the Sunday morning. The voting system employed by Conference is as follows:

A $\frac{2}{3}$ majority in favour of the recommendation makes it binding upon the General Service Board to take action.

A simple majority is just a recommendation to the General Service Board to take action if the manpower, time or finances are available.

General Service Office (GSO)

GSO in York provides a focal point for the Fellowship which links individual members, Groups, I/G's, Regions, the General Service Board and the General Service Conference. Acting as the European Service Centre, GSO responds to enquiries worldwide, co-operating with service structures within 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 (GSB)

The GSB 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, I/G's 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 2014. Sponsorship of the Sub-Sahara African Service Meetings in South Africa continues, shared equally with USA/Canada. The General Secretary and Board Chair attended the meeting in June 2015. AAGB also provides the accommodation for observers to our Conference.

Finance

The Fellowships 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 sponsorship of the project to establish the Young person's section within the AA structure of GB including the production of an up-to-date video entitled Alcohol and Me: A Message for Young People.

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 Roadshow 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

The Armed Services is a relatively new service discipline 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. Help the Hero's etc.

Electronic Communications

Early in 2013 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 (recently changed to a freephone number 0800 9177650) 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

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 hospitals and 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 literature committee has recently produced two new handbooks: The AA Service Handbook and The AA Structure Handbook. The production for both has been approved by Conference and they have been distributed free of charge to each AA GB registered groups.

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.

The literature committee continue its never-ending task of updating rewriting and producing new literature as directed by Conference.

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.

Prisons

AA (GB) holds meetings within 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 I/G's 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 new free-phone national helpline (0800 9177650), which is answered locally through a divert system by British Telecom (BT). However, during recent years, the number of first-time enquiries has decreased. A reason for this is unclear but may be due to the increased visibility of AA through our upgraded website, which facilitates access to meetings.

ICELAND

Structure

There are around 300 Icelandic AA meetings in Iceland every week which adds up to more than 16.000 meetings a year. Most of them are closed AA meetings but in one week you can find around 30 open meetings. You can also find 19 for women only and 6 for men only, book study and 12 step meetings, speaker meetings, meditation meetings and AA meetings with special emphasis for the newcomers.

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 two Polish speaking meetings, two Russian and a German speaking AA meeting, once a week.

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

The Icelandic H and I is called SOS; an abbreviation for; Sjúkrahús og stofnanir – Icelandic for Hospitals and institutions. Through SOS, voluntary AA members frequently visit hospitals, treatment facilities and prisons, and sometimes AA groups take on the task and rotate members serving there.

Internet

The internet has been increasingly used for communications and meetings amongst AA members. We now have two Icelandic AA meetings on Skype, mainly used by Icelanders abroad. AA groups also use closed groups on Facebook to stay in touch and carry the message amongst their members.

There has been quite a discussion between AA members about the anonymity on the internet as a media, especially concerning Facebook. This discussion carries on and we will see how this progresses over time.

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, prisons and schools for informing about AA.

General Service Board

The National Service Board (NSB) is made up of twelve trustees of whom nine are AA members and three are nonalcoholic trustees. The NSB has monthly meetings in the winter time. The board runs the National Service Office for AA 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 AA in Iceland on that day in 1954. The participation at that meeting is around 2400 AA members and friends of AA.

General Service Office

The National Service Office is based in Reykjavík and has a staff of one AA member as full-timer. The office is open all working days from 11am to 3pm, and takes care of all regular and routine work for AA in Iceland, similar to other GSO's.

Finances

Contributions from AA groups usually cover all the cost for 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 AA groups contributions and 10% by the Publishing Committee.

Literature – new or reworked.

Most of the AA Conference-approved books and 12 AA brochures have been translated and published in Icelandic. We also have the Big Book and 12 &12 on CD's and the Big Book is also reachable on our website, aa.is. Currently we are working on a material concerning AA for prison inmates; Memo to an inmate, and the pamphlets Twelve concepts illustrated and Problems other than alcohol are in consideration. The book Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers was published last spring. Editing and reviewing the old translation of the Big Book is now in process where a committee is overviewing the translation and seeking comments from our members.

Conference & Conventions

The Service Manual for AA 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 between 11am and 15pm. Tel +354 551 2010 and our E-mail: aa@aa.is
www.aa.is

IRELAND

Ireland: At present there are approximately 900 groups, 15,000 members and over 100,000 meetings annually. We have a healthy balance of both male and female members, and our female membership is showing particularly strong growth. Our A.A service structure in Ireland has been challenged last year due to not being able to meet our requirements for a quorum; consequently we held a special meeting of Conference to see best how we could overcome this challenge. Encouraging people into service remains a challenge, and we endeavour to encourage sponsorship in the area of service. The basic element of course is the group and meetings to continue to be well attended. Each group appoints two GSRs to the area committee, each area committee appoints four delegates to intergroup and each intergroup appoints four delegates to conference with four intergroup secretaries. General Service conference consists of sixteen G.S.C. delegates, four intergroup secretaries, seven trustees (four alcoholic and three non-alcoholic), two World Service delegates and a Conference secretary.

A.A in Ireland is financially secure with an ample prudent reserve. We are 85% self-supporting from tabletop contributions, the remainder comes from the sale of literature and convention surpluses.

The General Service Office carries a stock of conference approved literature. We publish a bi-monthly magazine, *The Road Back*, and a bi-monthly "News Sheet" (intended as an aid to service).

At the national level, the Board takes the responsibility for Public Information, and the board at this time developing a new strategy for Public information.

Our DVD *The Road Back* is widely used by Public information committees at the level of the areas and the intergroups. The DVD has been translated into a number of languages other than English.

We continue to update our website by improving and adding to it. In 2013 we released an app for smartphones called A.A finder; this allows a member to find a times and locations of meeting anywhere in Ireland, and is supported with Google Maps and directions to the meetings.

We have office space in Dublin which houses our General Service Office and this is further supported with a Central Service Office in Belfast; both offices are run by full time staff. I am delighted to report that Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland is continuing to grow and we strive for unity and how best to carry our message to the still-suffering alcoholic.

Next year is an important year for us as we will be celebrating our 70th birthday of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland. Conor F. emigrated to America in 1929, it was in 1943 he went to his first AA meeting. He returned to Ireland on holiday in 1946 and brought some big books with him, as he was determined to carry out the AA message.

He met Richard P. who was a patient in St. Patrick's Hospital, together they found four or five other alcoholics and held meetings in one of their homes. They held their first AA closed meeting in Dublin on November 18th 1946 and the first AA group was formed in Ireland and on November 25th the first public meeting was held in Dublin.

ITALY

General Structure

Alcoholics Anonymous Italy, established in 1972, has an estimated number of 460 Groups, located as 60% in Northern Italy, 30% in Central Italy and the remaining 10% in Southern Italy. This situation has been stable for the last 10 years.

It is composed of 19 Areas, which correspond to our regions. Each Area should have a maximum of 3 delegates who have the right to attend our annual Conference. We also have Zones (previously named districts) which should include from a minimum of 5 to 15 Groups.

As of now, our GSB consists of eleven trustees: four communicate with Areas and the GSB (two for the North, one for Central Italy and one for the South); five trustees are responsible for their Committees; one is our National Secretary and our Class A Trustee.

During our XXXI Conference this year the main question for all the Committees was:

Communication as a resource to grow: Considering the continuous repetition of the questions suggested, we need to find a way to acknowledge the Conference as a moment of true reflection to see our Association grow and mature.

May the Conference, through the Committees, indicate a method to achieve this important aim?

The answer was that the Committees must determine certain arguments which help our maturity using examples from the topics discussed during the WSM: communication, sponsorship of the Program, in service, etc., all of which must then be transmitted to the Groups.

This year we approved our Charter of the Conference.

As of this year, we have a toll free number for whoever seeks Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Internal Committee (Agenda)

This Committee is responsible for the organization of the Conference, our Annual National Convention and various service seminars from Northern to Southern Italy (whenever required).

It is responsible for the annual meeting between the GSB and the Area coordinators. It also implements the strategies identified by the Board to promote the growth of the Groups through the Program and the strengthening of our structures.

Its' current tasks are: it studied and accomplished the modifications of our Service Manual which have been approved during the Conference. It sponsors service seminars in collaboration with the regional trustees.

It also collaborates with Al-Ateen for the organization of the reunion during our Annual Convention to be held on Saturday morning based on the theme of our pamphlet "The Alcoholic and his children".

Public Information

The main functions of this committee are: it helps create the best conditions to carry the Message, increasing the visibility of Alcoholics Anonymous at both national and local levels. For this purpose, it maintains and develops good relations with the press, radio and television. In collaboration with our Class A Trustee, during these past few years, it has been organizing round table conferences for our professional friends during our Annual Convention. This moment helps develop relationships and partnerships with institutions working in the field of alcoholism. It ensures that our image is unique and correct throughout our national territory.

Its actual engagements are: updating and improving constantly our website. The work done has seen a new restyling of the website, it is now homogeneous and accessible to everyone. We are also creating mailing lists between trustees and delegates in order to have an immediate and economic communication.

They are also realizing two or three storyboards to be transmitted by our national television.

Literature

This Committee has asked and obtained the permission of the copyright to print the pamphlet "The 12 Steps Illustrated" and is now preparing these pamphlets to be sold during our Annual Convention as the latest novelty.

It is now searching for new collaborators in order to create a pamphlet regarding "The Psychologists". It is a very delicate theme, therefore it will take some time for the realization.

It is both an aim for myself and this Committee to start having an equal exchange of foreign literature. Now Europe is united, the best way to transmit the Message to whoever lives in our nations is to have "Big Books" and "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" in different languages (mainly English, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian...but not only) in our General Service Office. I do hope we can see this dream come true. The demand for foreign literature is increasing, therefore we find this exchange necessary.

This Trustee is also responsible for "Insieme in A.A." our semi-monthly magazine. The two Committees work together, seeing that it is possible. New stories are always requested, this magazine deals with Steps, Traditions and Concepts.

Finance and Budgetary

We now have a trustee for this Committee. The contributions between 2014 and 2015 have slightly increased. This Committee has put attention in the administration with an accurate control with the expenditures.

In collaboration with the National Secretary, they fixed the problems with the cellular numbers and purchased less stationary using mailing lists for all communications, including the quarterly Newsletter to all groups which have an e-mail. All these have been important steps to save money.

Literature sales have decreased, so is of the prudent reserve. In the meantime, though, we closed the year 2014 with 3.000,00 € on the credit side. These are good news for Alcoholics Anonymous Italy.

International

A list of willing people who speak different languages from Italian has been created to help whoever travels in Italy and needs help finding foreign speaking Groups. We help each other with translations, whenever necessary.

Prisons

The prisons asking for our help are constantly increasing. The inmates appreciate the moments spent during our stay and reading our official literature. The alcoholics who participate are enthusiastic.

The team is still sponsoring groups within prisons to increase their efforts and be present wherever and whenever necessary.

Even in these cases foreign literature is necessary.

During our Annual National Convention a meeting has been organized between members who are serving/have served in prisons and employees in order to have a clear idea a show to improve our service and carry the Message.

EURYPAA

This year we hosted the Convention organized by EURYPAA. People from Europe were present. It was a success. During our Annual National Convention, EURYPAA will have a moment for a reunion, on Saturday afternoon. They are definitely growing!

LATVIA

Structure

During these 2 years (since the last ESM) the number of active AA groups has increased – we now have approximately 60 groups, almost in all regions of Latvia, which means that the opportunity to attend meetings has increased. Meetings are held in different times, there are mostly Latvian and Russian, as well as one English speaking AA groups in Latvia.

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.

Last year a regional inter-group founded for one region – Kurzemes. The number of groups that participate in our regional inter-group are about 10. Meetings are organized every month, if possible, main activities - to provide support for small groups in region, establish and develop new groups, co-operation within region, represent region interests in Latvian AA General Service Conference and General Service Board, co-operation with Al-anon, social workers, professionals, etc.

General Service Conference, GSO and GSB

We hold a General Service Conference once a year for two days in March. All groups are welcome to participate in the Conference, and, in fact about 55% of groups send their elected representative to the conference, even small ones. This conference is also attended by the representative of the AA General Service Board, who is responsible for technically maintaining support services. The Conference also helps in spreading the message and educating members of groups regarding the Traditions, Concepts and Principles of AA. Conference elected chairperson of Latvian AA, deputy chairperson, chairpersons of Committees, a professional (non-alcoholic A class trustee), all elected persons serve on the basis of rotation.

There are several Committees participating in the service of our General Service Board – Finance, Events, 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.

In cooperation with several groups, Summer Camp (one week, usually at the end of July) for alcoholics and families and friends, Midsummer's Night event, New Year's Eve event, AA annual Anniversary, as well as the Annual Summer Boat-trip is organized.

Finances

The group contributions have increased. 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. Income from literature sales has decreased. Our financial situation can be characterized as solid. Our main expenses are comprised of professional bookkeeping, rent for the main office, help-line phone, translating, editing and publishing AA literature, and as an exception for this year purchase of new office equipment.

Literature

The work of the Literary Committee has been very successful. We are at the end on re-publishing the 'Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions' with adjustments in the new redaction with a more precise translation, since the previous one was old and inaccurate.

Last steps to complete new editing of translation of 'Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions'. Starting to prepare for print September/October this year.

We are preparing "Living Sober" first print in Latvia (previous prints were realized in USA, by the help of the GSO). We have plans on retailing this book in bookshops.

Pamphlet "Memo to an Inmate(..)" translated, waiting for editing. Planning to print this year. First original Latvian AA material prepared: "Secretary Handbook". Waiting for layout, to be loaded on website www.aa.org.lv.

After completing these tasks we going to work on 1) "Daily Reflections" absolutely new translation and 2) "Dr. Bob and Good Oldtimers" - first translation/edition in Latvian.

Other Services

In Latvia, groups convene in prisons (2-3 groups), hospitals (detox centers), and people from rehabs also come to AA meetings. We had a seminar about serving in prisons, helped organized by the Polish AA Fellowship, who shared in their experience, seminars are held in Latvia and for the third year our AA members go to Poland to gain some experience there.

Individual members of AA carry the message of Twelve Steps to people in rehabs and detox centers.

As idea of Committee that cooperate with Professional Community and Society, we have started cooperating with workers of Latvian Social Service, and this is the third year since it started, in a period of two years held twelve meetings in different regions of Latvia, all outside Riga. Attendants of those meetings are professionals - social workers, police officers, psychologists, clergymen - people, who are working with alcoholics and can inform them about AA, as well as send them to rehabilitation, if necessary.

We have reestablished our web-site www.aa.org.lv so that it is new-comer oriented. It is now more useful to people who seek help.

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. We also cooperate with Lithuanian AA, this year one of our members participated as an observer in Lithuanian GSC and two of Lithuanian AA representatives participated in our GSC. Every two years we 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 and information in web-site for youth and Russian speakers.
- Finding A-class friends to collaborate with.

Things we have developed well:

- The sponsorship movement.
- The translation and edition 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

Lithuania is divided into seven regions. There are currently a total of 123 AA groups (336 meetings per week, of which 32 are open meetings) in Lithuania and 13 Lithuanian speaking groups in England, Ireland, Sweden and the United States. Seven, of all the Lithuanian groups, are Russian speaking groups and one is English speaking group. There are 5 A.A. groups in prisons.

Our General Service Board consists of seven trustees, one from each of the regions, the chairman of the Board of Trustees and our office manager. Our Conference meets once a year and is made up of our Board of Trustees, five delegates from each region plus our ESM and WSM delegates.

The first new-format Service Conference was held in the fall of 2008. There were five representatives from the seven Lithuanian regions, along with trustees, WSM and ESM delegates, and the manager of the service office. The Conference work was assigned to the several committees (Finance, Internal, Public Information and Literature/Publishing) which prepared recommendations for the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees operates in the Service Office at J. Basanavičiaus a. 16, Birštonas, LT-59211, Lithuania. Phone No: +370 319 45141.

Service

Open AA meetings are held regularly in psychiatric hospitals, the Police, the Army corps, prisons, other social work places.

In the summer of 2013 A.A. Fellowship of Lithuania celebrated its 25th anniversary. The event was held in the Sports Hall in Alytus. Around 700 participants arrived from Lithuania along with the guests from Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine.

Finance

There have been no significant changes in finances. One-third of all the expenditure necessary for keeping the office is covered by sales of the books. The rest comes from the Seventh Tradition contributions. The groups' donations to the regions increased due to the stronger activities of the groups. After its 2008 launch, the new-format conference took a very important place in the service structure.

Literature

A CD with the audio Big Book was produced, a *Service Reference Book* was published and *Daily Reflections* and *As Bill Sees It* were reprinted. The Lithuanian Service Conference recommended publication of the book *A.A. Comes of Age* some time in 2009-2011. The book "AA Comes of Age" is now translated and published.

The some pamphlets is now translated and published – "Young people and A.A.", "Problems others than alcohol" and "The A.A. member – medications and other drugs".

Contracts with distributors of the books "Alcoholics Anonymous" are already signed. Books are on sale in major bookstores and online bookstores. The book "Alcoholics Anonymous" can be read online on our website.

"Twelve Concepts for World Service" by Bill W. has already been translated and sent to New York to confirm that we can print it out. Also every quarter of the year a magazine "Penktaskampas" (The Fifth Corner) is published. And once or twice a year - the service leaflet "Ausra" (Dawn).

MALTA

Background

Malta-officially the Republic of Malta (Maltese: *Repubblika ta' Malta*), is a Southern European island country comprising an archipelago in the Mediterranean Sea. It lies 80 km (50 mi) south of Italy, 284 km (176 mi) east of Tunisia, and 333 km (207 mi) north of Libya. The country covers just over 316 km² (122 sq mi), with a population of just under 450,000 (despite an extensive emigration program since the Second World War), making it one of the world's smallest and most densely populated countries. The capital of Malta is Valletta, which at 0.8 km², is the smallest national capital in the European Union. Malta has two official languages: Maltese and English.

Malta has a long Christian legacy and its Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Malta is claimed to be an Apostolic See because, according to the Acts of the Apostles, Paul the Apostle was shipwrecked on Malta. Catholicism is the official religion in Malta.

Alcohol Consumption in Malta

According to a report issued by The World Health Organization published last year the Maltese consume an average of seven liters of pure alcohol a year, which is well below the European average of nearly 11 liters and far below the high-scoring Belarusians, Moldovans, Lithuanians and Russians, who score an average of over 15 litres of pure alcohol per person each year.

Globally, Europe is the continent with the highest consumption of alcohol per head. Malta's consumption placed it at 43rd out of 53 in the European batting order but WHO's alcohol consumption report on Malta may hide some worrying trends. It points out that, as a rule, the greater the economic wealth of a country, the smaller the number who abstain from drinking and the more alcohol is consumed. This has been the trend in Malta over the last decade or so, although almost a fifth of Maltese are lifetime abstainers, albeit with a marked disparity between men and women (10.7 per cent for men and 27.6 per cent for women).

However, the most worrying aspect of the study concerns alcohol abuse among Maltese 16-year olds, where it appears to be rampant. Malta had ranked second among 36 countries for binge-drinking in a survey conducted in 2011.

The WHO report pointed out that Malta had no national policy on alcohol consumption. The lack of such a policy could well be storing up significant health and social problems for the future.

The Children's Commissioner has already made proposals for raising the age limit for drinking to 18 in line with that practised in most European countries.

This is clearly a sensible step in the circumstances. But it also needs to be backed up by stronger measures to stop children from being served alcohol in bars and restaurants, as well as concerted preventive health campaigns to bring home to young people the long-term harm caused by alcohol abuse.

WHO goes further and also recommends the possible introduction of fiscal measures to discourage alcohol consumption. While applying heavy taxes to alcohol may be a good way of increasing government revenue, there is no evidence to suppose that, on its own, it reduces abusive alcohol consumption.

In Malta, with its not insignificant wine- and beer-making industries and its attraction as a tourist destination, the unintended consequences of such measures could be nugatory. Nevertheless, as the report highlights, while Malta's alcohol problems seem, on the surface, to be reasonable, there is absolutely no room for complacency, especially where the younger generation is concerned.

AA General Structure and services offered in Malta

AA Groups are established at 8 key localities across Malta. In total there are six Maltese Language groups and 12 English language groups (of which two are bi lingual). In spite our small size – both in membership numbers and island size we can boast that we have at least one meeting every day of the week. We have also a group in Gozo that meets regularly at least once a week.

Reaching to Prisoners and patients in Mental Care Hospital

Early in 2015 AA Malta started a meeting in Prison. This meeting is in its very early days, but growing strongly every meeting. We are pleased to announce that we are having full support and encouragement from the local authorities and social workers working in the Malta prison. We are now in the process of re- opening a meeting at 'Mount Carmel Hospital' – the national hospital specializing in mental care treatment and rehabilitation. Unfortunately we are finding the way forward to be difficult due to bureaucratic processes involved to get the necessary permissions. To add insult to injury not all psychiatrists involved in the hospital leadership believe strongly in A.A. But as we all say. *No pain no gain* and we believe *that one day the penny will drop*.

Challenges

Like in any organization not all is nice and rosy in our fellowship. Although we have the saying '*small is beautiful*', being a fellowship which is small in number (as mentioned in my introduction population in Malta is just over 450 thousand) we at times face some tough challenges.

In particular financial limitations and problems to find members to serve other suffering alcoholics. Although every group has its own secretary, treasurer and GSC representative, most groups do not follow the '*rotation*' principle. Some secretaries/treasurers have been serving in the same group for over six years. This can be a symptom of apathy which could be felt throughout the fellowship during the past year.

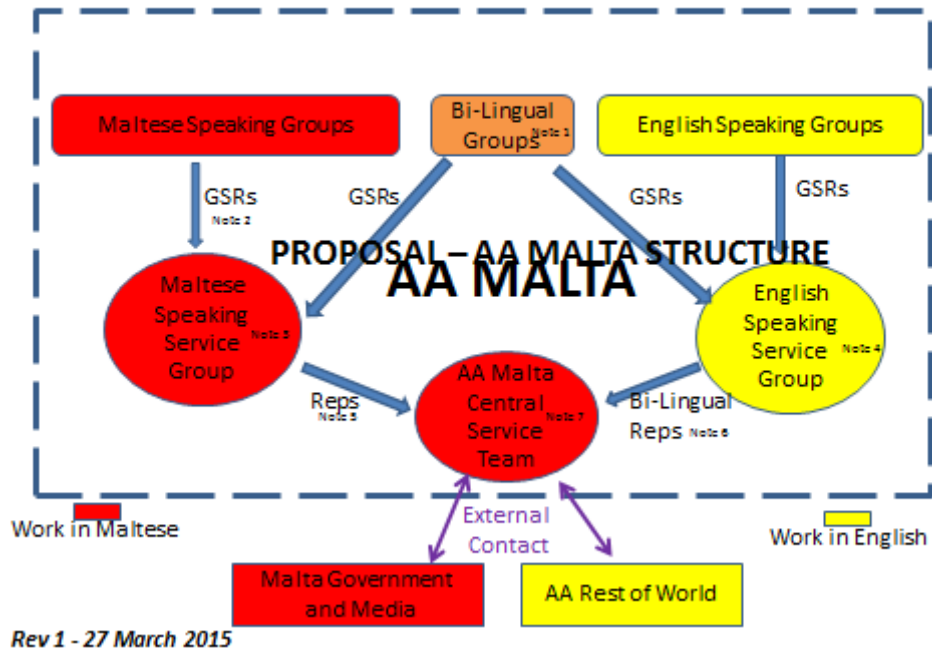
General Service Committee

The General Service Committee (GSC) met regularly every six weeks during last year and till August this year. Unfortunately, attendance both by committee members and GSC group representative was not always very encouraging. For sure we experience a language barrier and to an extent a cultural difference between Maltese speaking Groups and English speaking groups. We are presently discerning the way forward with a possibility of a new (service) structure for Alcoholic Anonymous in Malta. Please refer to diagram below. The drawing suggests a single structure for AA Malta intended to serve the needs of all alcoholics in Malta, whether Maltese Citizens, Maltese Residents or Visitors . AA Malta is a single unified entity within which alcoholics of any nationality may seek help.

Within AA Malta the interests of alcoholics and the needs of local groups would best be served by a Support Groups which conduct their business in the relevant language, but all working in parallel. Currently, the great majority of alcoholics served by AA Malta speak Maltese, English, or both. Thus 2 separate Support Groups are appropriate.

There are a few important support activities which for financial, logistical and consistency reasons must be provided by a single central focal point e.g. web site management. This Team will be SMALL – say 3 persons – and will not be involved in day to day issues affecting either language group. It will work in a single language which will be Maltese.

We look forward to meet late in October to discuss feedback from groups thereof taking a decision for the best of suffering and recovering alcoholics in Malta.



International Connections/Relationships

We strongly believe that we should strive for unity and a healthy relationship not only on a local level, between local groups but also with fellow recovering alcoholics worldwide.

AA Malta has had representatives to the European Service Meeting since the early 80's and has sent two delegates to attend every meeting since then. (Here I am ☺) .

We have sent representatives for the World Service Meeting for the last three times. Unfortunately due to lack of funds, members have to fund their own travel and accommodation. The same can be said for the AA World Convention, every five years. We had representatives in Minneapolis, San Antonio and Atlanta.

On an individual level, members have contacts with several groups in London, Edinburgh, Ireland, Rome, Milan, the list goes on. Our members frequently visit International Conventions, especially in Europe, to mention a few, *All Ireland, Italian National Convention, Blue Bonnets, Greece Convention, Brighton, Blackpool* and many others.

It is always a joy to share our experience strength and hope with others around the globe.

Malta – 10th International Convention

As in previous years AA Malta will be holding its annual International Convention. This year we shall be celebrating – our 10th Convention – 50 years of AA in Malta and 80 years of AA Worldwide.

The theme for this year's convention will be: "It Works ... It Really Does" Dates: 6th to 8th November 2015. It will be our honour and pleasure should you join us for this great event. Please do visit our web site www.aamalta.org should you need further information.

Literature

During the past year we got approval for the translations presented for '*Daily reflections*' and '*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*'. We are now in the process to go for print. Together with the *Big Book* now we will have the three main pieces of AA literature translated in Maltese.

On Behalf of AA Malta I would like to thank all those who gave support to our fellowship to pass on the message to other suffering and recovering alcoholics. A special thank you goes to all the personnel at York who help maintain AA as an International organisation and made our presence at this European Service Meeting possible. May your Higher Power fill you with love, strength and joy to overflowing.

THE NETHERLANDS

General

The Dutch AA community currently comprises 212 groups, spread across six regions, with a total of about 3200 members. There are also several women's groups which have been added in recent years. In addition, there are also a number of Polish speaking groups. There is good co-operation with the English AA, especially in the public relations sphere.

Structure

AA in the Netherlands is built on the principle of delegated authority based on the so called "inverted pyramid".

- Groups
- Regions
- General Services Conference
- General Service Board

In 2014 the entire Executive Board, resigned following a breach of trust situation. As a result, during a special ADC, a new interim committee was formed. This led to a new Executive Board being elected during the 2015 ADC. At the same time an advisory commission was established to further examine the legal structure and provide recommendations to the ADC on how to proceed further.

Commissions and other Services

Finance (FINCOM)

FINCOM oversees financial management within the AA community. Due to changes in day to day operational aspects this group has been temporarily unable to carry out its monitoring function. By the turn of the executive committee of the Fincom has temporarily cannot perform its monitoring function. During the course of 2016 it is planned that this this will be resumed again. Contributions from AA groups in the Netherlands still remain a source for concern.

Literature (LITCOM)

LITCOM is responsible for translation, development and revision of all the leaflets, books and other communication materials.

In 2015, four new members have applied to join this group. Good contact has been established with our Belgian LITCOM colleagues.

Public Information

The COI oversees requests for help and information from organizations outside AA. It provides a general information packet in kit form for public media use. In addition COI organizes a national information day with additional non AA guest speakers. They are also responsible for the annual AA convention.

AA 24 hour telephone helpline

This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is staffed by volunteers.

Website (AA.NL)

The website has been established and maintained in accordance with the guidelines laid down by AA worldwide. A recently introduced webstore is proving a success in meeting today's need for online shopping facilities.

NORWAY

General

Norway is situated in the northern part of Europe. The size is 385.178 square kilometres, with a coastline of over 21.000 km (i.e. more than halfway around the world). To populate this area, we are 5.084 million inhabitants. 618.683 inhabitants live in Oslo, our capital.

Meetings and groups

Although AA came to Norway as early as 1947, as the second country in Europe, we are relatively few AA members, about 1.800 members in about 180 groups. We do not grow as much as we would like, but the percentage of women coming to AA is steadily increasing. At some meetings the participation of women are 50%.

We have English and Polish speaking groups in the larger cities and Norwegian, or Scandinavian, speaking groups in Thailand, Spain and the Canary Islands.

General Structure

Norway adopted our present AA service structure in 1975. We are divided into 5 regions, with the principal purpose of nominating trustees to the General Service Board. The regions are divided into 20 districts.

The groups in each district elect one District Representative (DR) for every eight group, to represent as delegate at the annual General Service Conference, to be held in, or nearby, Oslo during March/April. The DRs constitutes a two-thirds majority at the conference. Also participating are members of the General Service Board, the general manager of the General Service Office and volunteers, plus the editor of our magazine, Boks 205. In addition representatives from the other Nordic countries are invited as observers.

The General Service Board

The General Service Board is at the moment composed of two Class A trustees (non-alcoholics) and six Class B trustees (alcoholics), all elected on a five year term. Each of the Class B trustees are an elected chairman of a standing committee. The standing committees are: Finance, Literature, Working with others, Policy and Communication within AA.

'Communication within AA' is a new committee. The main focus of this committee is the internal education of our members, and especially our DRs. New district representatives and deputy representatives are offered a two days workshop to be more confident in their service, their role towards the groups they represent and the work to be done in their districts.

We are happy and grateful to welcome our two new Class A trustees. Bergsvein Byrkjeland, Senior Adviser within hospital management with specialties in health economic, project manager and process development, and Laila Riksaasen Dahl, bishop emeritus. They are both very qualified and a great help in our work to reach the still suffering alcoholics.

General Service Office

The General Service Office is allocated in the middle of Oslo. The office is open 4 days a week. We employ one person, our general manager, in a 70% position, and an assistant in a 30% position.

Finances

Our income is divided between contributions from groups and members, and the sales of literature. Unfortunately, we see a slight fall in literature sales, which means that the contributions from our groups and members have to grow in order to maintain our activities. The brochure: 'Self Support: where money and spirituality mix' (from GSO), has been translated into Norwegian and distributed to all our groups to set focus on the importance of our self support and the 7th Tradition.

Norway has attributed to the International Literature Fund almost every year.

In 2014 Norway sponsored two delegates from Russia to participate at the World Service Meeting in Warzaw, Polen.

Norway attend with two delegates in the European Service Meeting and the World Service Meeting.

Literature

Norway is well provided with literature and our Literature Committee is keeping a close eye to new publications and renewals from the GSO.

The Big Book has been published in pocket-size and become popular.

We have also got the permission to translate and publish the Australian brochure: 'The AA group conscience'

Our magazine, Boks 205, with a print-run of 800 copies, has maintained a very high standard and continues to be very popular among our members.

Internet and Telephone

The web site: www.anonymalkoholikere.no is still being improved.

AA in Norway has a national telephone service seven days a week. This service is operated by the groups on a rotation of one month each. Many of our members came to AA through this helpline.

In Norway, radio and television commercials are not allowed to be broadcast on Christmas Day, Easter Sunday and Whitsunday. This broadcasting time is distributed among nongovernmental organizations. We have produced information material for radio and television which have been broadcasted several times.

Working with other countries

Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway are taking turns in hosting the annual Nordic Meeting (NM). Delegates from each country share experience and learn from each other.

Other Services

The Intergroups and groups around the country are doing service and held meetings in hospitals, treatment centers, prisons, schools and other.

In 2022 we will celebrate our 75th birthday in Norway. We would like to make a Jubilee edition on this occasion, and at the moment we interview our Norwegian old-timers to hear their stories. This is a very important and interesting task.

One of the regional healthcare enterprise in the eastern Norway has invited AA into their project group for cooperation between the users and the helpers (doctors and healthcare personnel). This is a major step for AAs participation in the healthcare society in Norway.

Final Remarks

Even though the spirit is good in AA Norway, we still are not growing as much as we would like. We have a lot of work to be done. Let's focus on honesty and quality in all our tasks and affairs, and hope that will be attracting to the still suffering alcoholic.

POLAND

A.A. Structure

The main purpose of the whole structure of the Fellowship of AA in Poland is the same as that of each AA group in the world – to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholics wherever they are and whoever they might be. As of April 15th 2015 the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Poland has nearly 2700 groups, about 160 of which hold their meetings in correctional facilities, divided in 85 Intergroups in 14 Regions including the European Region. This region comprises over 160 Polish-speaking Groups in 12 countries. Each Intergroup can choose the Region they wish to join.

General Service Conference

The General Service Conference is composed of: a) members of the General Service Board (Board of Trustees) - not more than 14 alcoholic trustees and not more than 5 non-alcoholic trustees and 2 national delegates participating in European Service Meetings and World Service Meetings, appointed from nominees presented by the regions, b) up to 56 delegates elected by the regional conferences (each Region sends four delegates), c) General Manager of the General Service Office (BSK), editor-in-chief of "Zdrój" bulletin, editors of periodicals "Wieści" and "Skrytka 2/4/3" and the employees of the office cooperating with the conference committees.

The Conference is held every year usually in November in a location agreed by the Conference delegates in the preceding year. The delegates work on four standing committees: Agenda, Finance, Literature and Publications as well as Public Information and Cooperation with Others Outside AA.

The main content of the annual Conference consists of reports from the Chair of the Trustees' Board, the Chair of BSK Foundation Council, the General Manager of the General Service Office, national delegates, editor-in-chief of "Zdrój" bulletin, chairs of Conference Committees and rotating trustees, election of new trustees and voting upon committee responses and recommendations. A two-thirds majority makes the recommendation binding upon the Board of Trustees, the General Service Office and other tiers of the AA structure, whilst a simple majority is a recommendation.

Last year Conference approved a long awaited Service AA Structure Handbook for members of the Fellowship in Poland, who are interested in any of the services provided by the Alcoholics Anonymous.

For the last five years we have been organizing together with our friends from AA Fellowship in Great Britain special international panels at the Conferences for observers from AA Fellowships in, mainly but not limited to, the Post-Soviet Union countries.

General Service Board

The General Service Board (The Board of Trustees) is currently made up of 14 alcoholic trustees, 3 non-alcoholic trustees and 2 national delegates who participate in ESM and WSM. The procedure of electing trustees is that each Region elects up to two candidates and sends their names to the Board's Nominating Committee. The Board's Nominating Committee chooses the suitable candidates and recommends them to the General Service Conference.

The main purpose of the Trustees' service 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.

Each trustee and national delegate has specific responsibilities and work on one of the following trustees' committees: nominating, questions for Conference, service AA handbook, cooperation with professional community, correctional facilities, 12th stepping and helpline, digital media and website, translations and licensing, regional publications and archives, finance and budgetary, agenda and general service conference and translation of Big Book. The trustees and delegates also available for other AA services activities as requested by the Board of Trustees.

General Service Office

The General Service Office (BSK) is a registered foundation providing effective and efficient legal, financial and administrative services for the whole Polish speaking AA Fellowship. Its functions cover also publication and distribution of AA literature, co-ordination of national conferences, workshops and other AA events.

The Foundation Council convenes four time times a year to review the Foundation's strategy.

Service

Service starts at the group level. Groups have a chair, a secretary, a general service representative (GSR) who serves in the Intergroup, a treasurer, often a literature representative, and sometimes a welcoming committee.

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 and organize information meetings for professional communities. Intergroups' treasurers and liaison officers for prisons, public information, telephone and electronic communication, and agenda attend monthly region subcommittees' meetings where they share their experience with treasurers and liaison officers from other intergroups. Also GSRs and chairs of the intergroups attend regional assemblies to get information from the region, trustees' board and GSO and give a feedback to intergroups and groups.

The Regions run contact offices, telephone and online service; they provide public information. We are very strong in correctional facilities; 214 AA groups are present in 156 jails and prisons. We have a very good relationship with the management of correctional facilities. Every year we organize workshops for the officers, some inmates also attend these events.

We share our experience in this matter with other countries; AAs from Ukraine, Latvia and Lithuania joined us at the April workshop.

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

We maintain contacts with the Fellowship in other countries and they are not only our closest neighbours.

With the financial support of the Great Britain Fellowship we are inviting other countries, especially Post-Soviet Union ones, to our General Service Conference, 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 participate in ESM and WSM. We also get invited to attend Conferences in other countries like Great Britain, Germany, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia, Latvia etc.

Every year we organize nationwide workshops for AA service liaison officers representing all levels of AA structure – AA groups, intergroups and regions, separately for various areas: literature and bulletins, telephone and internet, correctional facilities. All these events are attended by GSB trustees, the GSO general manager and staff and very often by AAs from other countries. Special consideration and attention is given to the cooperation with professional communities, real friends of our Fellowship. Regardless of everyday working relations with a wide range of people having in their work a direct contact with alcohol addicted persons we appreciate meetings with them in one place in Poland almost every year.

Significant efforts are put into Public Information area. The Board of Trustees in cooperation with the General Service Office (BSK) and very often with our dedicated ex-trustees take actions to increase awareness of the "outside world" about AA. We keep regular contacts with the Polish Parliament, release TV spots and publish articles in newspapers, organize 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 we organize special workshops for those who want to share their experience with current service representatives. In addition we organize similar workshop for Regional Chairs and Intergroup Chairs on a national level.

As regards choosing topics for the General Service Conference, we collect suggestions from the entire AA in Poland through GSRs, delegates and trustees. The 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 cooperate and that we bring our principle of the groups having the ultimate authority and responsibility in our structure.

2014 year saw the 40th anniversary of AA Fellowship in Poland joyfully celebrated by over 6000 participants from Poland and many other countries at August gathering in Warsaw. Last year Warsaw was also a host of the 23rd World Service Meeting; the location was chosen by the previous World Service Meeting in recognition of Polish AA's effective activities for the welfare of the Fellowship.

Finance

The Fellowship of AA in Poland is self-supporting thanks to our 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. This ratio still seems to be not sufficient and there are lots of efforts to change the Groups' awareness in this matter.

Workshops for AA groups and intergroups treasurers are held regularly at various levels of AA structure to increase awareness of AA members that the self-support of the Fellowships is to be secured by our own contributions.

A.A. Literature

Our General Service Office publishes General Service Conference approved AA literature. So far there have been published and distributed the following AA copyright books and booklets: "Alcoholics Anonymous", "Living Sober", "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions", "Anonymous Comes of Age", "As Bill Sees It", "AA in Prison: Inmate to Inmate", "Came to Believe", "Daily Reflections", "Pass It On", "Dr. Bob and The Good Old-timers", "The Best of Bill" and "Alcoholics Anonymous, Reprint of 1939". Nearly thirty pamphlets have also been published and some more are being translated. Since there is a great demand on some particular items "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic—Never Too Late", "A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic", "A.A. and the Armed Services", "G.S.R. May Be the Most Important Job in AA", "Many Paths to Spirituality" and other publications Our General Service Board applied this July and August for licenses to translate, reproduce and distribute.

We are currently preparing the fourth edition of the Big Book which will include 43 personal stories of recovery. As part of this effort we have taken on a project of reviewing the current Big Book translation and have formed a trustees' committee.

Our bulletin "Zdrój" with a circulation of about 3700 copies and a service bulletin "Skrytka 2/4/3" with a circulation of 1600 copies are published bi-monthly. A special bulletin for professionals "Więści z AA" (News from A.A.) is distributed every quarter of a year via e-mail. For a few years we have had a full translation of the reports from the European Service Meeting and the World Service Meeting.

Last year our General Service Conference approved and our General Service Office published "Service AA Structure Handbook" for members of the Fellowship in Poland.

This is a useful tool for AAs and compendium of knowledge about the history of AA in the world and Poland, AA service structure in Poland, forms of carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholics, online media and AA literature published in Poland, etc.

Internet & Helpline

Our General Service Office maintains an official AA website at the domain 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 online 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 over 20,000 visits on the site per month. In the General Service Office a communication server was installed 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 National Telephone Helpline 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 Helpline". A new website is under preparation. It will help all members of Polish speaking AA Fellowship get a quick and effective access to the required information on AA activities and events.

PORTUGAL

The formal AA service structure in Portugal has now 16 years. We've been through rough times by some disunion and also misconduct from some AA servants. These situations lead to lack of trust, few members who dare to do service and also lack of focus in our main purpose. Although these situations are now something belonging to the past, there are still some sore members who keep these memories alive. We've been in and out the ESM and really don't have formal ESM Delegates. Some of us understand the need and benefit from participating and not being alone but sometimes it is very difficult to pass on the reality of the advantages.

Structure

We are now 82 groups (73 Portuguese speaking, 8 English and one French speaking). The great majority of groups are linked to the AA service structure via their GSR. At a Regional level, they gather in Areas. One of these Areas doesn't have any Conference Delegate but all the others have one Delegate each. We have 11 Areas so the annual meeting of the Conference has 10 delegates, the board of trustees and the Chair of the Conference. We used to have 3 Regional Trustees but as per now we don't have any. So, the Board actually has only 3 AA servants who manage the GSO and deal with every aspect of AA as a whole. During this year, they have met with the Conference Delegates from all Areas in order to keep the AA Unity. We have 2 non-alcoholic trustees who are mostly available for PI actions.

AA Portugal has an Area of Atlantic Islands (Azores and Madeira) who, in spite of all actions, feel and are somewhat apart from the rest. We are using Skype to communicate but they feel somehow isolated.

One of our highest concerns is lack of service structure servants. We see some good prospects but they are still lacking some time and service experience. We hope to see this serious problem improved over time.

We support some AA groups in Portuguese speaking countries like Angola, Cape-Vert and Mozambique. They are listed in our website, we sell them European Portuguese literature and we will begin to send them our magazine *Partilhar*.

Our head office services are organized in committees: Literature and Publications, Public Information and Institutions, Telephone Answering Services, Website and Events. We have a paid secretary who does the administrative work.

Next year we will make our AA survey to members.

We are in the process of launching a Service to Loners or Isolated Members.

Literature and Publications

These used to be 2 separate committees but, due to lack of servants, they were united. They publish our quarterly publications: magazine *Partilhar* and bulletin *Os Três Legados*.

They also publish books and pamphlets, the majority of which are authorized translations from the English versions of AAWS Literature.

We did a new version of the Service Manual and also published some guidelines, namely PI Guidelines. These are made by our AA servants and are also based on US and UK guidelines and manuals.

Finance

Due also to the problems that we had, our finances are short. Anyway we now see that almost all groups are contributing to GSO and this is really good news. We have some alert servants who keep a critical eye on where the money is spent and are raising questions about having an office and a secretary or spending on those the amount of money we are currently using.

We now have a printer to make in house some of our publications and this has proven to be a good measure to save money. Before this, almost everything was made in a printing company, raising the costs.

Also due to the Portuguese crisis, we have been reducing our budget as much as we can. Starting this year we are now going slowly to some more adequate levels.

Public Information and Institutions

Most Areas are doing this service and we see many actions going on. We started temporary sponsorship for patients in some treatment centers (Bridging the Gap) and this is bringing good results. We are also facilitating meetings in prisons and treatment centers. Some Areas published the AA contact info in local newspapers.

At a national level we have some trouble as we are lacking servants with the needed profile.

Telephone Answering Services

This is really more than the title because on this committee we are also answering help request that come from e-mail. So we are enlarging the committee scope but still don't have a new name yet.

We are keeping our schedule of customized service where an AA servant answers the phone calls. We have a 7 servants pool – one for each day of the week. They answer the calls from 10:00 am till 10:00 pm. The Committee Chair answers the e-mails. We keep a statistic about all this.

Web

As our exterior maintenance web technician changed his work status and began a new career with a more powerful web platform and because we had previously some compatibility problems, we are now changing our web platform and redesigning the site. We will provide new services as a Daily Reflection subscription and a Literature order.

In the near future, we will also deploy the possibility of event register and subscribe. We hope to launch the new site on October 1st.

Events

This committee deals with national events. Next year we will have, as always, a National Service Forum in February, and the Conference annual meeting in March. We will also have the National Convention in November 2016. These 3 events are good opportunities for several actions, namely PI actions and new literature publications.

RUSSIA

Number of groups

AA in Russia began in the late 80s. In 1987, GSO registered the first AA group in Moscow. At present, Russia has more than 500 groups in 120 settlements. The groups work mostly in big cities. Some of them hold meeting several times a week.

In the European part of Russia has registered about 400 in 90 settlements. Over the past few years we have seen significant growth of AA groups in our country.

Structure

General Russian Conference of AA held in Moscow every year in early April for three days. Conference participants are delegates from groups where there is no local service, serving AA delegates from local committees, the members of the Board of AA Service of Russia, the international delegates ESM and WSM, AA Director of the Office of service. In recent years, the number of participants with voting rights do not exceed 40 people. Conference forms a committee to make recommendations on the main directions of Russian AA service, elects the members of the RSO, RSB. Conference in their work based on the "GUIDELINES FOR Russian A.A"

In 2012, several members of the RSO have started to carry out the May meeting, attended by representatives of 50 AA groups from different parts of the country. It is alternative meeting also called the "Conference".

By decision of the GSB AA and WS AA 2013 to the present time for Russia was issued 2 licenses for the publication of AA literature, which expires in November 2015. This year, we were asked to choose one legal entity, which will be granted a license. 07.15.2015 we received the news of the GSB that from 01.12.2015 the license for the publication and distribution of AA literature will be granted the Russian AA. We hope that this decision based on the group conscience of AA Russia, expressed in the decision of the 27 Conference of AA Russia will finish differences and allow help build a unified structure AA service in our country.

Finances

Voluntary donations in 2013 amounted to 460 thousand rubles, in 2014 - 700 thousand rubles.

Literature

In 2013 - 2014 years in Russia published 9 books in Russian:

Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Living Sober, Came to believe, Daily Reflections, AA grows, As Bill sees it, Dr. Bob and glorious veterans? Service Manual (US and Canada). The book "Alcoholics Anonymous"

(4th edition) is available in full, with stories, as well as a work option (without stories). In addition books are published 40 titles of brochures and booklets.

Since 2008, work is underway to refine the Russian translation of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous." Since 2013, began preparations for the publication of some chapters verifying transfer.

The Board of the General Service AA Russia provide AA literature to the groups through regional service structure (literary committees, Intergroup). Local service structure set prices for literature, depending on local conditions, but not more than 20% of the value established by the RSO.

Some AA groups receive literature by the Fund service of AA - a nonprofit organization that due to circumstances related with the formation of the AA service structure in Russia, also has the right to publish and distribute AA literature in Russia.

SLOVAKIA

Number of groups

The first AA group was founded in 1990 in Bratislava (capital city of Slovakia). Since ESM 2015 the number of AA groups increased from 41 to 48. There is one English speaking group in Bratislava, one group with meeting in both Hungarian and Slovak language, and one on-line group.

General Service Conference (GSC)

Each group sends one delegate to General Service Conference. The General Service Conference members is composed of groups delegates, the 12 members of General Service Board, the ESM delegates and guests who had been invited by the Conference Team.

Members of GSC are divided into four standing committees: Organizational, Financial, Literary Committee and Committee for Public Relations.

The Slovak general Service Conference takes place once a year, usually in March.

General Service Board (GSB)

GSB consists of GSB chairman, deputy chairman of GSB, GSO chairman, 2 non-alcoholic trustees, 6 alcoholic trustees (from each region one, regions with large number of groups may elect 2 trustees), the treasurer, 2 national delegates, editor of Prameň (magazine of AA), and 4 chairmen of committees (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 language:

Books: Alcoholic Anonymous, Living Sober, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Daily Reflections, Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age.

Pamphlets: The AA group...Where it all begins, Is AA for you?, AA as a Resource for the Health Care Professional, A Newcomer Asks and 44 Question, Many path to Spirituality

Recently we are preparing translation of Experience, strength and hope and new edition of Alcoholic Anonymous with personal stories of Slovak AA members.

Finance

Our major source of finance is the sale of the literature, the rest are members contributions. Members contributions had declining tendency. To improve this situation, we plan to edit pamphlet concerning of 7. tradition and also to have meetings during the National convention about this topic.

Prisons

We have 6 AA groups in prisons, both for men and women.

Hospitals

Number of treatment centres for alcoholics where AA member regularly inform alcoholics about AA, or there are an AA meetings.

In 2 hospitals AA members organize regularly workshops about 12 steps program – there is very good cooperation with doctors.

There still does not exist a treatment centre based on 12 steps program in Slovakia.

Because of 25 years anniversary of AA in Slovakia, we have invited doctors to National Convention 2015, with whom we have cooperated in the early days of AA and who helped us in this work in order to thank them for their contribution in the development of AA in Slovakia.

Public relations

In this field, much work has been done in recent years. AA pamphlets were issued that contained a preamble, address, contact numbers. These pamphlets were distributed to doctors, churches, hospitals. We plan to extend this to all regions.

In one region it was broadcast on TV the AA program.

There is in Bratislava a meeting once a month for the public about the 12 steps program.

AA members in October attended the conference Slovak Adiktologie where they lecture on AA.

Relations with Other Countries

The inspiring relations we have with Poland though common attendance at AA events, by having our observers at Polish Service conference and trough inspiration how to approach the service.

Very close and warm relationship we have with AA in Czech Republic.

Because we have no language problems, we attend each other at events (conventions, 12 steps seminars). In 2014, the members of Slovak AA were as observers Czech General Service Conference and two Czech members participated in our GSC. We mutually benefit translated AA literature.

Our members are taking parts at different AA events all over the Europe more and more often. Some of our members attended also International Convention in Atlanta.

We do not have a sponsor as a country, neither had we sponsored anyone.

Internet and websites

Our official website is www.alkoholici-anonymni.sk is permanently refreshed based on remarks and requests of members. Access to the relevant information is easy as well as maintenance.

We have an e-mail online AA group called *Sober space* established in 2006. with more than 500 Slovak and Czech speaking members from all over the world. Also we have one online meeting (SKYPE) every day. It is a good solution for all those who do not have an AA group in their towns or for alcoholic whose health does not allow them to take part in live meetings.

Magazine

Since April 2002 we have been published our magazine PRAMĚŇ 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. This magazine is published in 500 copies. They are distributed to the treatment centres, libraries and AA groups. PRAMĚŇ is self-supported.

SLOVENIA

Literature

Committee for publications translated and published five books: Alcoholics Anonymous – complete size and abridged pocket size, 12&12, Living Sober, Daily Reflections, As Bill Sees It, Came to believe, and 10 pamphlets. All translations were licensed by AAWS. Twice a year Slovenian AA magazine named Koraak is published.

Finance

Financial Committee is organized according to Slovenian legislation as a Society with its own by-laws and bank account managed by professional accountant. Financial sources are gathered exclusively through the contribution of AA members and from the literature. Contributions from outside are not accepted.

Number of groups

Slovenia has population of only 2 million people. First AA group was established on November 6th 1989. Today there are 52 groups with approximately 600 members.

General structure

The Conference of AA on March 21st 2015 established new/improved Organization of AA Slovenia:

Each group has a chairman, treasurer, literature man and a delegate (General Service Representative), elected for two year period.

General Service Conference (GSC) takes place once a year. Each group among its members elects one GSC delegate. All delegates join at the Conference, listen to Committee reports of last year and discuss the next year program. Every second year the delegates elect one third of new GSB members. Administrative and technical tasks for the Conference are done by GSO.

General Service Board (GSB) is responsible for all the activities accepted at the Conference. It consists of 9 members: 1/3 are non-alcoholics, who promote the management of alcoholism in various fields of the society and support the activities of AA, 2/3 are alcoholics that are sober for at least 5 years, know well the structure of AA functioning, are able to serve with their knowledge and have the capacity so lead and connect people. The members of GSB are: the president, who is non-alcoholic (At the end of 2014 new president was elected), the secretary, 2 members – non-alcoholics and 5 members – alcoholics, that are also leaders of one committee (*for public relations, for publications, finances, for electronic communications and for AA meetings*).

Each committee consists of three members with four years mandate. Previous, present and future leader (previous delegate is cooperating in, but is not a member of GSB) rotate on their posts every two years.

General Service Office (GSO) is formed by the members of GSB. They function also as administrative workers of the Board.

Other services

Nine AA groups take place in the Psychiatric hospital Ljubljana, and one in the Psychiatric hospital Vojnik, one takes place in the biggest prison for men. One group in Ljubljana is "English speaking group".

Relations with other countries

Committee for AA meetings:

For the time from 2nd to 4th of October 2015 one Slovenian group organizes International Convention in Gozd Martuljk – Kranjska Gora.

From 2011 we have ESM, and from 2012 WSM delegate participate ESM and WSM meetings. Four members of Slovenian AA joined WSM in Atlanta this year.

Internet and websites

Committee for electronic communications: All information for the alcoholic who is still suffering are available on automatic telephone responder 0038614338 225. There is also the web page www.aa-drustvo.si with relevant information and the list of meetings in Slovenia. E-mail addresses: info@aa-slovenia.si. and international@aa-slovenia.si.

SPAIN

Structure

Currently there are four regions in Spain composed of 25 Areas and 596 Groups, (12 of which are in Prisons) and there are about 10,000 members. Within this structure there are many non Spanish-speaking Groups and they have a significant participation in our events, both in service and coexistence.

Every year we hold four Regional Service Forums, four General Service Board meetings and in April of this year we hosted our XXXVI General Service Conference. In this way we share our experience in service, trying to improve our efforts as much as possible.

General Service Board

Two Delegates of the General Service Board attended the World Service Meeting held in Poland in October 2014.

We keep up contacts with different Official Organisations and our General Service Board has maintained contact with various official bodies, such as the Judicial Power Council, General Management of the Medical Services in the Moncloa, Penitentiary Institutions and in several National Medical Congresses and Conferences.

Finance

As a result of the communication and awareness of our Groups and Area members, contributions have recovered, achieving an increase of the same, so that in 2013 and 2014 we covered the budgets approved in the Conferences and we were able to recover a reasonable reserve fund in these years.

Events and Public Information

We celebrated the commemoration of the anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous in June 2014, in a "white" (isolated) area: Benavente (Castilla-León).

We held an information meeting with the Mayor of Benavente and the Head of Psychiatry Service of Nuestra Señora de Sonsoles-Avila Hospital and members of our General Service Board. During this week and during the meeting, we held a number of interviews with more than a dozen local, regional and national media, thus creating a great deal of awareness about this event.

Presently, we are organizing our 10th National Convention, which will be held in October in Benicàssim (Castellón). As a result of this event, we are initiating a sizeable public information campaign in this area, both at a social and at an institutional level.

Literature

There has been a slight stagnation in the use of Literature with a great increase in the use of new technologies to reading and downloading material.

We provide appropriate Literature in each case and also the appropriate material in the Public Information Dossier to interested parties. Increasingly we are getting requests for information for audiovisual media.

In the last year we have increased the subscriptions of members to our magazine "Akron" and the bulletin "Compartiendo". As in previous years, in order to promote knowledge of the working of Alcoholics Anonymous, we continue providing these publications to healthcare professionals, social workers and other interested parties.

SWEDEN

AA Sweden was founded in 1956. Today we have about 500 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 one friend 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, Policy and IT.

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

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. "Servicebladet" is distributed to all AA-groups.

Information

The Swedish website, www.aa.se has a new design from august 2015, 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 20 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 2014/2015

AA in Sweden has had its current structure since 1992. The GSB decided in December 2012 to review the structure for central service and appointed therefore a working group, which has submitted a final report at our Service Conference 2015. The new Service Manual is in charge from 1st of august 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 2014 was held April 4-6 and the theme was "Carry the message, Through service". Participating in this conference were 21 delegates, seven trustees, one employee from GSO, one member of the Association Alcoholics Anonymous, one representative from Bulletinen and two international delegates. There were also invited guests from Norway and Finland.

The Service Conference 2015 was held April 10-12 and the theme was "Three Legacies, vital for all generations". Participating in this conference were 21 delegates, six trustees, one employee from GSO, one member of the Association Alcoholics Anonymous, one representative from Bulletinen and two international delegates. There were also invited guests from Denmark, Finland and Norway.

The World Service Delegates have been participating:

- the World Service Meeting in Warsaw, 2014
- the European Service Meeting in Frankfurt 2013

The Nordic Delegates have been participating:

- the Service Conference in Denmark (2014 and 2015), Finland (2014) and Norway (2014 and 2015)
- the Nordic Meeting (incl. Nordic Delegate Meeting) in Finland (2014)
- the Nordic Delegate Theme Meeting in Norway (2014)

SWITZERLAND (FRENCH AND ITALIAN SPEAKING)

Number of Groups

There are 56 groups in French and Italian speaking Switzerland: 5 groups are in Italian Switzerland and the other 51 are in French Switzerland.

Structure

AASRI is divided into 3 areas which are represented on the General Service Board by a trustee who is elected by the Conference. 1) The Cantons of Geneva & Vaud Area; 2) The Cantons of Valais & Ticino Area; and 3) The Cantons of Fribourg, Jura, Berne & Neuchatel Area. Within the 3 areas there are 5 Inter-Groups, four in the French-Speaking part and one in the Italian-Speaking part.

General Service Board

The board meets 4 times a year and is currently comprised of 2 Class A servants (non-alcoholic), and 12 Class B servants (alcoholic). The board includes the Chair (Class A) and the Vice-Chair (Class B), 3 Area Trustees, the Treasurer, the Conference Committee chair, the Public Information Office chair, the person responsible for the Literature Office, a very busy secretary, the person responsible for External Relations, and last but not least the European Service Meeting delegate, and the World Service Meeting delegate as it is now French-Speaking Switzerland's turn provide the delegate as we alternate with French-Speaking Belgium.

Conference

We hold a Conference for 2 days every year in March. Each AA group in the region is encouraged to send 2 delegates. (Only one has the right to vote.) Guests also attend from France, Belgium and German Switzerland. 37 groups sent 1-2 delegates to our 2015 Conference.

Matters to be dealt with at the Conference are selected from proposals sent in by the groups, as well as any that are voted necessary by the GSO. A committee made up of GSO members reviews the proposals and pre-workshops are then organised to which all who are interested are invited through a missive sent to all the groups. These workshops lay the groundwork for the committee that will deal the subject at the annual Conference.

The 2015 Conference committee topics included:

- Change to the Conference's voting quorum requirements: Should groups that don't have a delegate present at the Conference be included in the count that establishes a 2/3 quorum? (The Conference voted to change the existing practice and count the voting delegates in attendance to establish the quorum.)
- Telephone hotline: Is one hotline telephone number feasible for the whole region, or should we continue using the phones now managed at the Inter-Group level? (The Conference decided that the region should continue with the Inter-Group helpline phones, as in general it works well.)
- How to promote giving to the Sobriety Dollars Fund, and what should be the destination of Sobriety Dollar contributions? (Promotion should be done at the group level, according to group autonomy. Sobriety dollars are, in principle, to be sent to the International Translation Fund at WS.
- Does the Conference need to establish guidelines for the chairperson of the home group meeting? What can home groups do to improve receiving newcomers? (No special guidelines need to go into the manual on "how to chair", group autonomy is to be respected. Receiving and welcoming newcomers is both the chairperson's and group members responsibility.)

Public Information

The PI offices at the Inter-Group level gave numerous public information events. At the group level many members contributed to helping make these a success. These public information meetings were held in hospitals, schools, and other institutions.

AA in our region has had the chance to profit from the support of our natural allies, those who work in various institutions and centres, such as medical professionals as well as in the media. News organisations provided us with support through a variety of reporting, which included testimonies and interviews. In some areas local newspapers offered free space to advertise meeting venues and schedules.

Billboard campaigns continue, Clear Channel continues to grant their support putting up our billboards for free.

Many flyers as well as brochures were printed in diverse formats in French and Italian.

The Internet

The AASRI website has continued to see improvements in both attractiveness and user friendliness. It also became fully compatible with the main mobile operating systems, iOS and android.

Helpline

Helpline phones are supervised by each Inter-Group. There is a service position at the Inter-Group level specifically for managing the helpline phone. In general it works well. For example a home group will have the phone for a month, and group members share the service.

Literature

Our Literature Office and storage facility moved. It's new location is more central and the rent is lower. The Literature Office continues to work in close cooperation with the Literature Offices of France and of Belgium.

Finance

We had another 2 years of staying within the budget.

CEFE (Carrefour Européen Francophone d'Echange)

The CEFE is a workgroup/committee that meets at each of 3 Conferences, in French-Speaking Switzerland, in French-Speaking Belgium, and in France. The goal is to further growth in unity and action to fulfil the Toronto "I am responsible" pledge. The ESM and WSM delegates, the External Relations trustee always take part, there are members from the Literature Offices, PI Offices, etc. also in attendance.

Proposals put forward at the CEFE committee meeting at this year's Conference:

- Poly substance dependence is an established fact. In this day and age to have only one addiction is increasingly rare.
- Service relationships can be developed at the Public Information level. Also, as is done with Al-Anon and Alateen at our conventions, other fraternities could be invited to put up their own literature stands.
- AA is rich when it comes to literature. We could share more of our literature with Other fraternities that employ the 12 Step program.
- The newcomer need to find his place, where he identifies the most in regards to his/her own dependencies. Not to forget AA meetings are for sharing about alcohol and alcoholisms.

- French AA Literature online in Europe: The committee proposed that "Editions AA"(French AA Publications) be requested to determine the technical and financial feasibility for creating an online European catalogue for French publications. This digital catalogue could then be made available to the 3 national structures. (France, Switzerland, and Belgium).

UKRAINE

For today, about 120 A.A. groups act in Ukraine. And nearly 1,300 A.A. members attend them.

In 2014 the A.A. groups in Odessa formed a new, Southern A.A. region, and now there are six A.A. regions functioning in Kyiv, Volyn, Odessa, Lugansk and Donetsk, Poltava, Lviv and Ivano-Frankovsk areas.

Despite the military actions in the East of our country, the vast majority of the groups of Eastern Ukrainian region are serviced by our Ukrainian A.A. service structure. Other regions help the Eastern one to get necessary A.A. literature and informational materials.

Service Structure

The meeting of Ukrainian Service Conference is held in May or April annually. The composition of the Conference is the following: six Class B Trustees (one from each A.A. region) which form Ukrainian General Service Board along with two international delegates to the E.S.M. and W.S.M., and with Class A Trustee(s); up to four delegates from each of six AA regions to the standing Conference Committees (Literature, Informational, Organizational and Finance); coordinator of the Service of carrying the A.A. message in correctional facilities; executive editor of A.A. magazine "Dzherelo" ("Wellspring"); our Office worker; Board of the General Service Office (mainly consists of the same persons as G.S.B.).

The 16th National Service Conference that was held in Kyiv in May 2014, adopted a new edition of Statute of Ukrainian Service Center of A.A. (Ukrainian G.S.O.), and elected a new personal composition of the Management Board of the Center, as well as its chairperson.

Our friends from Poland, the General Manager of the A.A. Office in Poland and a trustee of Katowice region, attended as observers, and helped us a lot.

Our 17th regular National Service Conference was held in Kyiv in May 2015. We are very pleased that the representative of G.S.B. A.A. U.S.A./Canada, the International Delegate and Trustee-at-large, came from overseas, and worked hard with us together there, at the Conference.

A question about problems in functioning of the Ukrainian General Service Office raised at this Conference. The Conference decided to extend its own meeting by one extra day, July 26, in Lutsk, where to consider reasonable proposals on the transfer of Office location from Kyiv to one of the regions of Ukraine.

Also the Conference decided not to confirm the credentials of active chairperson of the Board of Ukrainian G.S.O., and to elect a new one in Lutsk, too.

Then in Lutsk the Conference took a decision to change the location of the premises of our G.S.O. from Kyiv to Poltava. In addition, the personal composition of the Management Board of the Center was changed by elections, along with a new chairperson of the Management Board. We anticipate that these measures will help us in strengthening Unity and in improvement of A.A. service in the regions of Ukraine.

Our National Service Board currently consists of eight members: six Class B trustees and two delegates to the World and European Service Meetings.

We regret to inform you that another member of the Board, our Class A Trustee, Stanislav Kostiuchenko, psychiatrist from Kyiv, passed away earlier this year.

Our National Service Office, the Ukrainian A.A. Service Center, was founded in 2003 by the decision of the 4th A.A. Service Conference in Ukraine and officially registered as the public organization "Ukrainian Center 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 Center has one paid employee who works three days a week in the office.

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 continue making our efforts in providing self-sufficiency of A.A. literature in Ukrainian. Earlier this year, we finished the work on the translation of the A.A. texts such as "12 Steps", "12 Traditions" (regular and extended forms) and "12 Concepts" into Ukrainian. This work was carried out in close cooperation with G.S.O. New York. We received the permission from A.A.W.S., and published a few pamphlets and booklet in Ukrainian, and continue translating some, too.

The G.S.O. New York helps us with the literature in the Ukrainian language, namely Big Book and 12x12, which we get at a reduced price.

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 2014 were about 129 160 UAH and in the first half of 2015 they were at the level of 56 784 UAH.

Financial expenses in 2014 were about 129 581 UAH and in the first half of 2015 they were at the level of 65 195 UAH.

Sources of funding are: the distribution of AA literature – 85 008 UAH (65.82 %), voluntary contributions from A.A. groups and regions in Ukraine – 42 205 UAH (32.68 %) and private anonymous donations – 1947 UAH (1.50 %). This is the data for 2014. During the first half of 2015, the proportion was 48 535 UAH (85.47 %), 7 365.5 UAH (12.97 %) and 884 UAH (1.56 %) respectively. In such a state of affairs it is often difficult to hold workshops for service structures and information meetings.

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 quarterly meetings of the National Service Board are held in Zhytomyr (November), Lutsk (July) and Kyiv (February) at the time of such forums.

In June of the previous year, the International convention where we celebrated the 25th anniversary of A.A. in Ukraine, was held in Kyiv. We are very grateful to everyone who came to share with us Freedom, Joy and Happiness (such was the motto of the Forum).

In September 2015 the new AA English-speaking group started in Kyiv.

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. We have a good experience in organization of press conferences with TV journalists just before AA forums/conventions. 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 seven years has brought fruitful results – an exchange of experience in providing quality consultations on the alcohol problem.

Celebrating 80th Anniversary of the AA we held the press conference on Wednesday, the 10th of June, in Kyiv, Unian news agency's press-center. We had five speakers there who represent health care, social services, rehabilitation centers and university education. One of the speakers among them was our class A Trustee, and all of them are good friends of our Fellowship. The link to the recorded video from this press-conference is available on our A.A. website.

In September 2015 we held the workshop "Carrying the A.A. message" in Odessa. The speakers from different regions of Ukraine, and two our Polish fellows shared their experience in carrying the A.A. message in correctional facilities, media, police, educational institutes, hospitals and rehabs, clergy, courts...

Prisons

The A.A. group "Light Way" has been in operation in Poltava men's correctional facility # 64 since March, 2012. A.A. Meetings are held weekly on Saturdays.

An A.A. group has functioned in the Poltava women's correctional facility # 65 already two year long. There meetings are held for the time being two times a month.

Representatives of A.A. fellowship in Ukraine constantly take part in International Workshops on A.A. cooperation with prison services, which take place every April in Poland.

An A.A. group acts in Zhytomyr correctional facility # 4.

Internet & Websites

The internet site of A.A. in Ukraine, www.aa.org.ua, has been in operation for ten 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. In the "Conference" section we place the actual information on the activities of the National Service of A.A. in Ukraine.

We are working to improve the form and content of our website.

There is a few regional websites in Ukraine, along with a couple of unofficial sites too.

It has become a good tradition to hold meetings of the committees and G.S.B. Ukraine on Skype regularly.

Relations with other countries

We are constantly interacting with the A.A. service structures in Poland, the European office in the U.K. and the G.S.O. in New York. Our delegates and observers of the national and regional service structures typically take part in service conferences and conventions in neighbouring countries. In particular, Ukrainian delegates participated in the 17th E.S.M. in Frankfurt and in the 23rd W.S.M. in Warsaw.

Our Polish friends regularly participate in service conferences and A.A. conventions in Ukraine. The Katowice region helps Kyiv region in A.A. activities (workshops on the steps, traditions and service principles, etc.). Regions Lublin, Warsaw, Galicia, Baltic region act similarly in the Western A.A. region in Ukraine.

We appreciate their presence and fruitful participation in AA events in Ukraine, and will rely on this support in the future.

Our contacts with the G.S.O. in New York and Europe are supported by our service structures, and we plan to work more closely through our international delegates.

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 carrying the A.A. message, and to strengthen the image of A.A.

Committees & Workshops

Service Committee

Chair: **Colin T** Malta

Alternate: **Michal S** Czech Republic

Lotte R - Austria

Maxim S - Belarus

Michal S - Czech Republic

Erkki H - Finland

Dagur H - Iceland

Rita M - Italy

Darius C - Lithuania

Nils-Ivar S- Norway

Alunia D-K - Poland

Donatila A - Portugal

Mykhailo Araslanov - Ukraine

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

1. Has your country discussed the use of social media/internet in carrying the message? For example YouTube, Facebook & Twitter. What were the outcomes of these discussions?

Nearly all countries that had explored the use of social media reported concerns about how it could not be controlled and could lead to loss of anonymity and non-observance of AA Traditions.

The conventional AA website on the internet was the primary method of communicating information and allowed full public access. Nearly every country appears to be developing their website.

Within AA there was also considerable use of Skype to bring members together either individually (for example sponsor to sponsee) or in groups. Geography was of course a determining factor in the use of Skype etc.

Finally we are reminded never to forget the real benefit of good old fashioned face to face communication. Technology is not the be all and end all.

2. More and more people who are dually addicted are now attending AA meetings. Share experience on this, and also how groups manage to maintain the focus at meetings on recovery from alcoholism, and to minimize discussion about other issues.

It was unanimous that discussion of other addictions at closed AA meetings was not acceptable. It confuses alcoholic members as to the meeting's purpose and can potentially take over the meeting. It is therefore essential that there be clarity on the meeting's purpose. This can be helped by giving newcomers who have dual addiction literature, but relies fundamentally on a strong chair to keep meetings focussed.

In particular, dual addicts who come to an AA meeting as it is the nearest support meeting for them must be reminded that the meeting's focus is exclusively alcohol.

Open meetings however are used in some countries to allow discussion/sharing on other addictions. If this is acceptable the chair should make that clear from the outset (or otherwise!)

Some specific aids to handling dual addiction issues are:

- **Details of local meetings for other addictions for example NA**
- **Leaflet "Problems Other Than Alcohol" available**

Finally, it was perceived that this problem was not a major issue for any countries and was being properly managed at all levels as and when required.

3. Discuss rotation at all levels of the service structure: what happens if there is nobody to succeed an officer who is due to rotate out? Does the post fall vacant or could the officer continue in that role long after they have achieved the recommended period of office?

It was unanimous that rotation of all service positions, however lowly or exalted, is crucial to allow others to give service and to prevent 'staleness'.

In some countries this was no problem but others had difficulties in filling service positions from time to time. Generally it was preferred that positions be allowed to become vacant if there are no committed volunteers based on the experience that someone will eventually feel obliged to volunteer. However in some circumstances where the role is legally vital or numbers are very small, continuing in a service role after the fixed period may be inevitable.

A number of ideas to encourage entry into service were described. For example:

- Don't be greedy
- No arrogance – don't assume only you can do the job
- Show enthusiasm in service
- Sponsors might insist that sponsees do service as part of their recovery and relationship with the sponsor
- Service handbook to cover rotation policies and procedures
- Newcomers to 'shadow' service providers so that they become comfortable and happy to take on such work in the future
- Meetings of service providers to discuss their experience, performance and difficulties they need to be resolved (with prompt action)

4. How do we start meetings in areas where there are no AA meetings locally?

Most countries had some experience of establishing new groups and some of the factors in ensuring their viability were:

- Ensure starter literature packs are available
- The centre to ensure that new groups get literature on a credit basis, or even free
- Where outside agencies request a meeting in their area/concern that full support to be provided centrally and locally
- Early checks from the centre on 'new groups' to establish that they are sufficiently stable for inclusion in publishing and website
- Holding AA events in areas away from AA groups in the hope it will generate interest in setting up a group local to that area
- Be patient

5. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 19th ESM Service Committee.

The Committee elected Rita M, Italy, as Chair of the 19th ESM Service Committee, and Dagur H, Iceland, was elected as Alternate.

Recovery Committee

Chair: **Loreta B** - Lithuania

Ivo D'H - *Belgium (Flemish Speaking)*
Sune -S - *Denmark*
Brian J - *Great Britain*
Dick O'D - *Ireland*
Kornelija Z - *Latvia*
Fatima O - *Portugal*
Pete W - *Netherlands*

Brit A - *Norway*
Dmitry T - *Russia*
Alica B - *Slovak Republic*
Jasna C-R - *Slovenia*
Christer Mn - *Sweden*
Mike G - *Switzerland*
(*French Speaking*)

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

1. What factors hold back the growth of AA in your country?

Factors that hold back the growth were discussed as follows:

- **Some countries particularly in Scandinavia & Slovenia mentioned social care policy which covers all needs and enable suffering alcoholics to continue to drink.**
- **The existence of alternative organizations such as churches and treatment centres who are profit making and who use negative media reports and misunderstanding by doctors and other professionals to further their own aims.**
- **Internal disputes and a lack of sponsorship, both personal and service. This is leading to a lack of knowledge and service and in some cases a decline in the Traditions.**
- **Lack of communication internally and externally. A lack of cohesion was mentioned by one delegate. Another delegate mentioned the lack of personal responsibility. In Denmark and Norway a new committee is being formed to try and encourage members to be better prepared and accept responsibility. Financial constraints were mentioned with less money coming in from the sale of books from treatment centres, as they don't need so many now because of the upsurge in the social care service in their countries.**
- **Lack of understanding about AA. Doctors in some countries such as Slovakia where doctors don't understand why members start their share by openly admitting to be alcoholic. They don't understand that honesty is part of recovery.**

- Some felt that suffering alcoholics wanted more instant relief without having to work at it. Particularly when some other recovery organisations encourage the mindset that drinking had stopped and therefore there was no need to follow up.
 - When people arrive from treatment centres there can be a lack of gratitude towards AA as they didn't arrive at 'rock bottom', therefore this can lead to a lack of commitment to AA, the handbook, the traditions, the concepts and service.
 - Some people in medical, particularly in Russia though that AA is a sect.
 - Sponsorship problems in Russia, where sponsors wish to take strong control. Also negative influences on unity and problems with literature and distribution.
 - One country mentioned a lack of growth because they have come so far. A change of approach is needed. With the onset of new treatments AA was not so much in the forefront but it was felt that AA is still growing.
 - One country reported that there are still some misunderstandings but the service structure and growth were all doing well.
2. Are the needs of agnostic and atheist AA newcomers and members sufficiently covered in AA literature?

Everyone felt that the needs were already met, whilst one or two thought that a book with agnostic stories in may be marginally useful, although there would be other things that were more important if money is tight.

The Big Book chapter two covers the subject adequately.

Some points were made as follows:

- Concentrate on the alcoholism rather than any religious aspect
- Look for solutions to the problem and respect of newcomers' beliefs. Each person's solution may be different. God or spirituality can help in reducing the ego. It's how we share the solution that makes the difference.
- Some newcomers will use the word 'God' to turn away from AA. Some thought that this was more that they were not yet ready to find sobriety.

3. Are efforts made at a country level to develop DVDs (or similar) explaining how AA helps alcoholics to achieve and maintain sobriety?

The majority of countries have not developed new DVDs although many have used productions from other countries using their own language subtitles.

Ireland had produced a new DVD and mentioned the very large expense of the production.

Britain had added British sign language to their DVDs and also produced a short young person's cartoon; neither of these projects was very expensive.

Latvia mentioned that the DVD that they had adapted from the USA was very old fashioned with subtitles. They had nothing for young people.

4. Discuss the place of online AA members within the AA service structure: should they be included in the AA service structure? Should there be an online intergroup for online meetings? How could online meetings be self-supporting? How would rotation be managed?

Slovakia and the Czech Republic have an online meeting running together, this meets 5 times a week with a different topic each time. A Slovakian member from the online group goes to the Slovakian conference, and a Czech member attends the Czech conference. The online group meet up once a year for a day. Each country has set up their own bank account in order to cover costs and make financial contributions to their own fellowship. They rotate officers every 6 months.

Most other countries had little knowledge of online groups, although comment was made that they are very useful in isolated areas or where there are housebound members.

Latvia, Norway and Denmark have Skype meetings, Denmark also has an e-mail group on the net, Norway's and Denmark's are mentioned in their group listings.

Britain is in the process of getting an online group included in the service structure.

A couple of comments were made regarding the anonymity problems with Facebook and the fact that an online group can never replace a face to face meeting.

Online groups can be a good idea depending on the country and full knowledge of how it can be managed.

5. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 19th ESM Recovery Committee.

The Committee elected Kornelija Z, Latvia, as Chair of the 19th ESM Recovery Committee, and Sune S, Denmark, was elected as Alternate.

Unity Committee

Chair: **Geoff H** Great Britain

Jiri H - *Czech Republic*

Marjatta K - *Finland*

Jürgen R – *German Speaking Europe*

Einar H J - *Iceland*

Seamus B - *Ireland*

Gita T - *Latvia*

Ivan C - *Malta*

Piet van Z - *Netherlands*

Pawel W - *Poland*

Lubomir B – *Slovak Republic*

James O'B - *Spain*

Gunnar M - *Sweden*

Igor B - *Ukraine*

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

1. Does your country invite observers from other countries to your conference? Has your country been invited to attend another country's conference? How is this funded? What are the benefits?

Most countries invite observers from other countries.

Most countries have been invited to attend the conferences of other countries.

Some countries pay for accommodation that other countries are attending – some have to pay their own expenses. There are also some joint funding arrangements. Sometimes members have paid for themselves.

Main benefits are: Sharing of experience, obtaining new ideas, giving support.

2. How can local home group members work with a similar group in another country to develop each other's understanding of wider AA issues and international unity?

There are no formal arrangements between a group in one country and a group in another. However there were many examples of informal arrangements between groups. There are some informal arrangements through business, vacations and language groupings.

3. How do countries bridge the gap between the local groups and the next level of the service structure which serves those groups?

The role of the Group Service Representative (GSR) is key to good communication, however not all groups have a GSR. Various methods have been tried to improve communication, for example sending a report to all groups by email.

It is important to sponsor people into service.

Having a service handbook and following its guidelines is very important.

Some service bodies visit AA groups to talk about service opportunities.

It was acknowledged that there are also gaps between other service levels in the structure which prevent good communications, including to and from the General Service Board.

4. Our 7th Tradition asks us to be fully self-supporting: how should the structure act if one of its bodies does accept an outside donation?

The committee was clear that donations should not be accepted from outside of the Fellowship.

When this happens the first step would be to talk the situation through with the group concerned.

If the group continues not to respect this decision the central office has the option of removing the group from its directory.

Legacies upon the death of a member should be subject to a maximum amount.

If the venue does not require rent to be paid then the group should make a donation either in cash or kind.

It was also acknowledged that group contributions should only be used for necessary expenses, any surplus being sent to the next level.

5. Suggest a theme for the 19th European Service Meeting.

The theme for the 19th ESM is 'Principles before Personalities'.

6. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 19th ESM Unity Committee.

The Committee elected James O'B, Spain, as Chair of the 19th ESM Unity Committee, and Marjatta K, Finland, was elected as Alternate.

Workshop: Is AA Working?

Chair: **Lotte R** Austria

Ivo D'H-Belgium (*Flemish Speaking*)

Erkki H - Finland

Einar H J – Iceland

Dick O'D - Ireland

Loreta B - Lithuania

Pete W – Netherlands

Brit A - Norway

Pawel W - Poland

Donatila A - Portugal

James O'B - Spain

Gunnar M - Sweden

Mike G – Switzerland (*French Speaking*)

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

1. Share experience from your country on the theme “Is AA Working?”

We all had experience that AA is working.

- Our experience is that it's working but that we must give it time to work.
- If you don't like one meeting you can always find another.
- If it's working at group level we will always get people in to service.
- We still realise that we are still having trouble reaching young people easily.
- When there are problems in groups a solution is to offer workshops and seminars.
- AA is working when jails and other institutions are open for AA because of co-operation.
- AA is working in many different ways but if we compare it to other structures, it can always be misleading.

2. Select a theme for the 19th ESM Workshop

'Preparing New People for Service'

3. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 19th ESM Workshop

The Committee elected Pawel W, Poland, as Chair of the 19th ESM Workshop on the theme of 'Preparing New People for Service', and Brit A, Norway, was elected as Alternate.

Workshop: Help Newcomers

Chair: **Alunia D-K** Poland

Jiri H - *Czech Republic*
Marjatta K - *Finland*
Brian J - *Great Britain*
Dagur H - *Iceland*
Kornelija Z - *Latvia*
Darius C - *Lithuania*

Colin T - *Malta*
Piet van Z - *Netherlands*
Nils-Ivar S - *Norway*
Fatima O - *Portugal*
Lubomir B - *Slovak Republic*
Christer M - *Sweden*
Igor B - *Ukraine*

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

1. Share experience from your country on the theme "Help Newcomers"

The committee shared their experience on the theme 'Help Newcomers' and the following points were noted.

- Everyone thought that the newcomer is the most important person in the AA meeting. Some countries had a standard guide on how to treat the newcomer, with greeters at the door and by giving literature packs. Some AA members also offered their personal telephone numbers in case the newcomer wanted to speak. Delegates from two countries said that members of their groups would not contact the newcomer first.
- The group members may share their own experiences of Step One to help the newcomer find identification with other alcoholics.
- There is an opinion that members shouldn't talk too much about steps, traditions or sponsorship – only to give the newcomer a feeling of being accepted and secure. Then after one week sponsorship can be mentioned.
- After one month of the newcomer's sobriety some groups offer a small service position at the group like cleaning the chairs away, washing up or making coffee.
- It is very important to give the newcomer written information about AA and alcoholism, such as AA pamphlets and lists of meetings.

- In one country Skype AA meetings are used to encourage the newcomer to attend a regular face to face meeting.
- It is also important for newcomers to get to know members of the group on a friendly level.
- In some groups members take newcomers to other groups outside the area to experience AA meetings in other places.
- It was reported that it is better to welcome a newcomer in a less rigid way and not overcrowding the newcomer and frightening them off with the steps, these would come after.
- Some groups in some countries don't take special care of newcomers. They don't offer telephone numbers to new members.
- Some members offer to speak to newcomers before or after the meeting (women for women, men for men).
- Some of the countries members offer sponsorship to the newcomer, starting on the first day working with the sponsor, exchanging telephone numbers and the newcomer calls the sponsor every day from the first day, working on the steps and service.
- There was some discussion on the methods used to get newcomers into AA through treatment centres, using business cards of group's details, some found AA through the church, hospitals, open meetings and jails.

2. Select a theme for the 19th ESM Workshop

'Sponsorship in AA'

3. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 19th ESM Workshop

The Committee elected Marjatta K, Finland, as Chair of the 19th ESM Workshop on the theme of 'Sponsorship in AA', and Brian J, Great Britain, was elected as Alternate.

Workshop: How to Carry the Message outside AA... In Prisons, Hospitals, Schools etc.

Chair: **Michal S** Czech Republic

Alternate: **Gita T** Latvia

Maxim S - Belarus

Sune S - Denmark

Jürgen R – German Speaking Europe

Geoff H - Great Britain

Seamus B - Ireland

Rita M - Italy

Gita T - Latvia

Ivan C - Malta

Dmitry T - Russia

Alica B - Slovak Republic

Jasna C-R - Slovenia

Mykhailo A - Ukraine

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

1. Share experience from your country on the theme "How to Carry the Message Outside AA"

The list of institutions that AA can approach in most of the countries are:

- Treatment Centres
- Prisons
- Hospitals
- Employers
- Halfway Houses
- Probation Officers
- Clergy
- Schools
- General Practitioners & Dentists
- Social Workers
- Libraries
- Armed Forces
- Police
- Medical Students

The general experience is to give:

- Presentations
- Workshops
- Information Meetings
- Regular Meetings
- Correspondence
- Providing Literature
- Media Information

One country is providing radio broadcasts of AA speakers for patients in hospitals.

Class A (non-alcoholic) trustees are very effective in carrying the message.

Guidelines for carrying the message outside of AA are very important as well as the standing committees in the service structure for public information.

2. Select a theme for the 19th ESM Workshop

'Understanding of Principle before Personalities'

3. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 19th ESM Workshop

The Committee elected Jasna C-R, Slovenia, as Chair of the 19th ESM Workshop on the theme of 'Understanding of Principle before Personalities', and Jürgen R, German Speaking Europe, was elected as Alternate.

Sharing Session & Closing Addresses

Sharing Session

Presentations on the Theme: "Keep it Simple"

Alica B (Slovakia)

My name is Alica and I am an alkoholik. I am grateful for the opportunity to take a part at European Service Meeting. Thank you everyone who made it possible.

My journey into AA actually lasted almost 60 years. Today I understand that the journey began on the day of my birth. I was born in an alcoholic family; it had all the signs of possible ill aspects. My father was an alcoholic grandfather was an alcoholic; a few of my uncles were alcoholics. It was not only that my father was an alcoholic and the family ruled continuously tension and terror, but the important role played atmosphere of this family and understanding of alcohol as something that is good for everything. The amount of alcohol consumed was a measure of the success of the action, it was necessary to have alcohol at home as a basic foodstuff. Alcohol was mainly the cure for all physical and mental problems. We did not have any drugs at home against the pain, flu, cold, cough, digestive problems, etc., there was no need, alcohol was still present as a successful cure. (I did not understand why this was not clear to physicians and pharmacists. In particular it is evident that drugs have many side effects.)

That belief accompanied me for a long time in my life. Later, when I started having problems caused by alcohol, again I tried treated it using an alcohol. So began an endless roundabout.

One day in the morning I woke up and I had the feeling that everything is better than what's happening now with me. I had the feeling that I'm the worst woman in the world, I am the worst mother in the world, I am the worst friend in the world, I am most unhappy person in the world. Nobody in the world is so bad and so unhappy as I am. Of the last forces I called my brother and asked him for help. I spent three months in the hospital and as part of treatment were obligatory visits to AA meetings.

As an exemplary patient, I bought books and I read them very quickly. Everything was clear to me I understood everything and I thought that everything concerning Twelve steps program is done.

AA in our country began in 1990, because during the former regime program AA was not allowed due to his spirituality.

In the city where I lived, there was not a group of AA, only the so-called sober club that I attended and it helped me stay sober. But I was not very happy, I was full of resentment, I had a feeling of guilt, injustice, anger .. these things I wanted to get rid of and then I remembered that in the book AA something about it. Fortunately, in our city was created a group AA, I began to visit it and work on the program.

Now I do the servis. Servis is very good for me to learn „take it simple“ As an adult child of an alcoholic, I always wanted to have everything under control - work, people, and even results. Take it simple for me was completely unknown. Working on the program, I tried to find the most perfect instructions on how to make the best, I spent a lot of effort to get the best forms, and finally I figured out that I can just take instruction in Big Book. To take it simple is very difficult for a complicated person, such as I was.

I go once a month to the hospital for an information meeting. At first I expected that patients will be enthusiastic, they'll ask contacts, and next month we will have a room full of newcomers. It never was the case. I was looking for ways to improve this, I searched the great instructions on how to lead an information meeting. Today I know that I'm not responsible for the result of my work, I simply tell my story, as well as did our founders. But the seed is sown, as it was in my case. And God decides when the seed begins to grow.

When I received an offer to share on ESM meeting, I started thinking about how perfectly I prepare presentation - perfect English, great style, audio-visual effects and something like this. Finally, I read the motto of the meeting - and my decision was: Take it simple. Just tell your story.
Thank you for your attention.

Mike G (Switzerland – FSE)

Dr Bob's last words to Bill W. were "Let's Keep It Simple", in reference to Bob and Bill's endeavors that would lead to AA becoming adult, forming a general structure et al where the membership assumed the leadership.

Dr Bob's address to the Cleveland Convention in 1950 referring to the simplicity of the 12 Steps which are resolved into 2 words, "Love and Service".

So Keep It Simple is about recovery too. A simple program for complicated people, and keeping it simple saved my life.

A brief version of my story, what it was like, what happened, and what it is like now:

Growing up in an Army family.

Drinking at a young age and as shy teenager, alcohol was the solution.

Idealistic, I became a hippy, my life in the drug subculture of the late '60's.

In my early 20's I replaced drugs with alcohol, returning to my drug of choice.

More of a complicated life. Marriage and children, then many geographic moves become the norm. I knew how to stop, but not how to stay stopped, going on the wagon and falling off again, over and over.

Hitting bottom in the Swiss alps, overcome with fear of trying to go on living, I finally made the phone call to AA.

At my first meeting I discovered the program's simple way to stay stopped drinking, 1 day, 24 hours, at a time.

On a daily basis, from the time I got up and throughout the day, simply saying "My name is Mike, and I'm an alcoholic and today I'm not going to drink." As many times as it took.

Recovery is so much more than just staying stopped. It was getting a sponsor and learning to work the steps, as simple as that, I began to rebuild my life.

Discovering the spiritual program of AA, gave me what I like to call a "feet on the ground" spirituality. For me, having my feet on the ground is also all about keeping it simple.

Growth through service and the AA family.

How attending the International Convention in Atlanta deepened my inner gratitude. But the newcomer and the home group are at the top of the list.

A final word on the gift of Acceptance, and no matter how hard life may hit any one of us with difficulties, the program's spiritual principles, the love and the support our AA family, see us through.

Closing Addresses

Gita T (Latvia)

Good morning everyone, I am nervous too. My name is Gita and I am an alcoholic from Latvia and it's my second time here. I wasn't sure what to say. I remember that an old timer from my group said if you don't know what to say, tell what has happened, how it was and how it is now.

When I was young my step father was an alcoholic and I vowed I would never be what he was. My son became a father at 18 years old after running away from home and I had a grandson at 39, when I was still drinking. It was a terrible time for my family, my little grandson and myself.

Eventually I started attending AA meetings, and when I was sober for 4 years I went to the Latvian General Service Conference (GSC), only because I was persuaded by some old timers to go and see what happens. At that GSC they elected me to go to Poland to attend the Polish GSC as an observer.

I went to the Polish GSC and when I came home I was very angry because I had gone there without any knowledge about AA in Latvia, the structure or how AA worked. One old timer replied... so you have a good start! So from then I learnt all about the Latvian AA structure, and also saw that it worked (when I work it). So thank you God, to the AA Programme and thanks to you. I don't know whether I will see you again any time in my life, but I am very happy and I love each one of you.

Thank you.

Gunnar M (Sweden)

Good morning everybody, my name is Gunnar and I am an alcoholic from Sweden, and 2nd term delegate.

I came to AA in 1988, and got sober in 1994. So it took me five years to understand that I couldn't understand the AA Programme – if I wanted to stay sober, just trust it.

My first meeting as an international delegate was at the ESM in Frankfurt 2013, where we decided to move the meeting to York and slightly change the form of the agenda. I think that this was a very good decision. My memories of the meeting in Frankfurt are not so sure, everything was so new for me, but one thing I do remember is all of the questions from the new countries when we were having coffee, and it was 'how to do in practice?' and 'how do you do it in your country?'. AA in Sweden was then 57 years old and next year we are celebrating 60 years.

In 2014 there was the World Service Meeting in Warsaw, Poland. We were there one day before the start of the meeting to see the City... this is a lesson we had learnt from Frankfurt. In Frankfurt we arrived 2-3 hours before the meeting was about to start, that was all. To York we started the trip on Thursday morning and arrived at about 3pm in York. On Friday we visited the Jorvik Viking Museum, to see...Sweden... The Vikings! ... then we had a look around the City.

What I have learnt at those ESMs? I have learnt a lot, how AA is working, which I have talked about in Sweden at different levels. At our big country meeting which we have once a year, and at our General Service Conference.

Our new agenda here is working very well, and I am very glad that I have been an International delegate and done service at this level. So thank you all, and some of you I will meet again at the World Service Meeting (WSM) 2016 in New York, my last meeting as an International Delegate.

Thank you all.

Mykhailo A (Ukraine)

Hello, my name is Michael and I'm an alcoholic from Ukraine. I am the 2nd term delegate to European Service Meeting (ESM) and World Service Meeting (WSM), and this is my last ESM. The next Ukrainian General Service Conference I will complete my term and will rotate out.

Firstly I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of you, the delegates of the ESM whom I have met, and with whom I have had the privilege to share experience, strength and hope, two years ago in Frankfurt and now here in York. Also I met some of you last year in Warsaw, and even three years ago in Rye Brook, New York, at the WSM.

This weekend we worked together during the committees and general session meetings. Shared in workshops, listened and discussed such great presentations. I want to emphasise the importance of informal communication in between meetings. I always felt the spirit of support, of service and of love here... the true spirit of AA. We really spent a great time together, and I will never forget every minute of it.

I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the GSB and GSO in UK, and the ESM Fund for the full financial support of our delegates from Ukraine, which has allowed us to participate in this meeting.

I hope that AA in the Ukraine will overcome some difficulties we face for the time being, and will become more self-supporting in the near future. I want to thank all of the people that worked hard to help us work fruitfully here at the meeting... Sophie, Angela, Jenny & Roger. Also all the people who are invisible to us, but do the important and invaluable work to organise and conduct this great AA event. I am very grateful to God that I have got a lot of friends who have helped, and I am sure will help me to stay sober, to be happy in my sober life, and to carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Thank you everyone

Seamus B (Ireland)

Good morning everybody, my name is Seamus and I'm an alcoholic. It's lovely to be here at the ESM. Yesterday Roger asked me to give a short closing speech, and I was delighted to accept. Any time I'm asked in AA to do anything, I love to say yes. AA, and service in particular has been very good to me. The first service I did when I was a short time sober and I was asked to do secretary in my own group, and I didn't want to, it took a lot of talking with other members to get me to do it. I was so nervous. Eventually I did do it... I thought would cause the group to close or some terrible disaster to happen.... but it didn't. Then when I had done that small bit of service, I was so pleased with myself as it was the first time in many years that I had done anything for anybody, I had been very selfish and this was the first change to come over me within AA. From then on went on to do more service of all kinds.

These days I feel quite comfortable doing service here today, even though I'm still nervous. If I do something wrong I know that you people will laugh, but laugh with me rather than at me. That's the marvellous thing about AA, we understand and support each other. Here we talk about the Unity, Service & Recovery – the Three Legacies, and service is very important for me as it gave me my confidence back, to get back into the workforce and so many other things in life, all thanks to AA.

On a more personal level, a God of my understanding came into my life and that was the biggest thing that happened to me in AA. At first I believed that there was no such thing as God, but today I firmly believe that there is a kind and loving God, and that's the real driving force in my life today.

I didn't want to come into AA, I'd look at the Steps and say that they are for everybody else, they had nothing to do with me at all. Eventually I did come to accept and had a big change of attitude. I believe that the Higher Power drives everything with AA. My sobriety today is due to nothing I have done personally, I have had help from the members and God. I stopped drinking many, many times, but this time with God's help it made such a difference.

Chapter Five is read so often at meetings back home, going as far as 'the three pertinent ideas', and today I firmly believe in that, that God can relieve my alcoholism. Without that I'd have no hope.

I thank you all for listening.

Greg T – General Manager, GSO USA/Canada

Good morning. I am Greg, an alcoholic, serving as General Manager of the General Service Office of the United States and Canada, located in New York City.

Thank you for the invitation to offer some closing remarks at the 18th European Service Meeting here in York, England. What a beautiful, charming setting for this meeting of delegates representing A.A. groups and service structures from 25 countries and language groups. From the very start of the weekend, my colleague from GSO, Mary, and I have felt at home and very much a “part of” the gathering at which you have shared your experience, strength and hope as recovering alcoholics and service workers in your respective countries.

Thank you, once again, to our hosts from GSO - Great Britain and our able chair, Penny, for their leadership and guidance, making the whole thing possible.

Later this evening, at 7 p.m. Eastern Time in the States, my home group will gather and welcome A.A. members, friends, and very probably one or two or more newcomers to recovery who are seeking a solution to their problem with alcohol. This is how it was 29 years ago when I stumbled into the meeting in South Orange, New Jersey. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired – though I didn’t know it then. Or, rather, I didn’t know how to describe or diagnose my malady, which I soon found to be alcoholism, a chronic disease of body, mind and spirit.

Penny mentioned something in her opening remarks about learning that “the first drink gets you drunk.” I, too, was baffled and fascinated by this concept – it was an unfamiliar concept to me, as you can imagine. I heard it early and often in those early A.A. meetings, and I heard a lot more things that, eventually, pointed me to the answers to questions I didn’t know I had.

In my case, I came in as a confirmed agnostic, lacking faith, having put aside the faith of my childhood and the church in which I had been raised. As a young person, I had embraced faith, including prayer and reading and regular attendance in community, as well as working with others.

All of that went out the window when I picked up my first drink to get drunk and, immediately, crossed the “invisible” line from “normal” drinking and behavior into a different existence entirely: I became an active drunk, and my entire life changed overnight.

Flash forward a dozen years. After hitting a number of bottoms, physical and emotional, and scraping by through life on a downward, destructive slide, Alcoholics anonymous came into my life – in a tavern in the same town, South Orange, where I would join a home group just a few blocks from where I took my last drink.

How we help others, the core concept of our Twelfth Step, was first shown to me by the man who answered the phone call made on my behalf and took me – and another drunk fellow – to an A.A. meeting one summer Friday night. Since that time, I have not picked up a drink, and I have tried to be of service to fellow alcoholics in the many ways that have been passed on to me by people exactly like those in this room today.

Here, during the European Service meeting, I have met many of you and spoken to you and listened to you. Our role, Mary's and mine, representing GSO - New York, has been to listen and learn, to observe and to offer any information or experience that might be of some interest to you, the delegates, and to the A.A. groups and boards you represent.

I had anticipated that I would keep a list of questions specifically regarding translations and licensing to bring back to the office, and I have done just that. There are answers and solutions to all of your questions. I can only ask that you continue to be patient and understanding that the volume of requests we receive, from European countries and, indeed, from all over the world, is at times overwhelming. We have two people – whom many of you know – working to produce the documentation needed for you to publish our copyrighted A.A. literature successfully. That is our goal – to provide you with what you need to help carry the message of recovery, especially through literature.

The value of this exchange of ideas and experience among friends cannot be over-estimated. It really traces back to the very first such exchange, as Mary cited in her keynote address, between Bill W. and Dr. Bob S. in Akron, Ohio 80 years ago. We are their direct descendants in recovery from alcoholism, following their path

The country highlights, workshops and committee reports were very inspiring and informative. The friendship and fellowship we experienced here will always remain with me as I embark upon the journey as general manager in the U.S./Canada service structure. And it certainly will not be the last time we see one another, whether here or in New York or –five years hence – in Detroit for the 2020 International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our colleague at the office, Rick W., shared a quote at the last ESM, attributed to a past WSM delegate, which goes as follows: "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."

In that spirit, I thank you for my sobriety and the opportunity to be of service in A.A.

Penny A (Great Britain) – Chairman of the 18th ESM

Thank you very much Greg, and thank you everyone for sharing and to every one of you here for having made the weekend what it is. I'd like to thank particular people, the staff, Roger, Angela, Sophie, Jenny and Chris who's not here today. Also the staff at the European Information Centre, which is up at our General Service Office, and my particular thanks always go to Karen who is our Management Accountant who produced the accounts and enabled you to have those in front of you for the meeting. Everyone at GSO does a lot of work on our behalf to allow this to happen.

Most thanks are to all of you for being here. If you don't come then there's no meeting, so I think we all deserve a clap! A lot of work goes on between now and the next ESM to make it happen. Not just work at the service centre, but amongst yourselves because people are taking reports back. You'll report back in your various different ways and you'll be preparing for the next meeting or your next service meeting or you may be helping the new delegate who will be coming next time, they've got to be sponsored into the role so I know you'll all be busy too. I'm going to be going home to bed because that's it!

I'd like to thank Greg & Mary for coming all the way from New York to be with us. It's a pleasure to have met you both and I wish you both well in your particular roles which may seem a bit daunting but I'm sure you'll cope with it! I know that there's been lots of conversations going on, there's a lot goes on behind the scenes between yourselves, gleaning information and exchanging things. The point that was made by one of the delegates about meetings between meetings, they are very useful.

I've heard laughter, I've heard intense conversation and all the reports that have come from the committees and the workshops are fantastic and I think the way that they're presented will be really useful. They're easy to understand and I like the fact that people came back and asked when they didn't understand so it was clarified for all of us. We can often sit there and think 'I don't understand this but I don't want to ask' but then you ask and other people say 'I didn't understand either!' so I think that's really good.

I'd like to thank you for the gifts that have been given and there are also packs from Ireland, useful information. I went to Ireland to my first trip away to a conference when I was a Board Trustee - thrown in at the deep end, a newbie, and I found it fantastic. I learnt so much and I came back from the conference inspired and proud to be representing Great Britain. Proud of what GSB GB were doing, but fascinated, interested and learning.

We took things back to GSB GB from what was happening in Ireland and that was my first experience. I've since been to Poland and the ESM. In Great Britain we don't have a board member at large. We share the work out and try and enable every Board Trustee to go somewhere at some point, to learn how it works elsewhere. It's not necessarily how it works for everyone but its how it works for us. I came back inspired! I thought "what am I doing being a Board Trustee?" but when I came back I was inspired, Poland inspired me and this has inspired me.

I have to say that I think of the way we've come together this weekend when we sit round the tables, and I'm very fond of a table! I think of Bill and Bob and Bill and Ebby and I think of how I drank round a table. I can remember, but I don't often want to, sitting at a table with a white tablecloth but it wasn't pristine because it had a lot of stains on it of the different colours of the different drinks that we had gone through during the evening and looking aghast at all those empty bottles. I don't do that these days because I come here but the sharing round a table is still important. There's something special about being round a table and talking to people face to face and sharing our recovery.

What we're here for is how we help the still suffering alcoholic, how do we take and what do we take back to our countries. I think we've got a lot from this weekend to take back and we've got the support that we know now for the new delegates, it's reaffirmed for the delegates that are here for the second time, that we're all out there, we're all wanting to help each other. For me it isn't the longer term countries helping the newer countries or the bigger helping the smaller it is about us all helping each other. It's like in a meeting where the newcomer says something and you think "wow that helped me". It's not always the old timers who've got something that helps me, sometimes it's somebody that's still drinking and they say something and you think "oh yes I get that". That's how it is, there's no hierarchy in AA we all learn from each other, were all in this together.

I think that had been expressed this weekend and all of you have had a say in the committees and workshops between each other and I'm really grateful for that and I'm very grateful for the privilege of having been Chair. Its very humbling because it's quite hard, it's harder than I imagined. One of the workshop chairs said to me it was harder than they'd expected and it is very hard being a chair in a committee, keeping people to time, trying to bring everyone in and speak, then it's over. But this goes on all weekend!

There's things that we plan, the staff have helped me so much, and when we had our agenda setting meeting it was fantastic. The three committee chairs, the staff and myself, with our experience of what we'd been through so far sat down and we planned everything through to the final detail but when it actually happens there's things you have forgotten or not planned for.

I really do encourage you to fill in your feedback forms and give your views because this is your meeting, it's about us. Those of you that will be back have something to say and those of you who won't be back have two years of experience to share with the new chairs of the committees and the chair of the next ESM so that they can use that information at their agenda setting meeting. That's how the next meeting will work; it's your input which will help them.

I really feel that I should just say, that for me we do all this and it comes back to sharing, whether it's actually my recovery or how I do service, and that's for each of us. We share it, we keep it simple by the sharing. The email list is fantastic, which you'll all be on. It's so helpful, we get to know each other, and we know where to go for information. But sitting once every two years and meeting each other face to face, and to have a coffee together is really keeping it simple, is back to basics and that's how we move on.

I'm really impressed with everyone being here and I wish you a safe journey home and those of you that are staying enjoy York, it is beautiful and the thing that it's taken me ten years to learn is that as you walk through the narrow streets look up! The buildings are wonderful! We got taken on a tour on Thursday night and I have to admit I haven't looked up before. And I looked up and the buildings almost touch in the Shambles, so those of you staying enjoy it. For those of you coming back next year think about adding a few hours to your stay.

I'm really grateful to be here and I wish you well with going back to your countries and passing on, in your own way, what you've gained from here and keeping the information coming back to each other via the email list. Not just questions but experience, what's happened in my country. If something is going wrong or if you've done something that was a success. If you've done something that worked well don't think 'oh they'll all know about that', we won't! Send us, tell us, let's all keep in touch and thank you very much.