

# **PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES**



**19<sup>TH</sup> EUROPEAN SERVICE MEETING 2017**

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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 thirty one European countries gathered together at the Park Inn, York, on the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017 to take part in the Nineteenth European Service Meeting.

The European Information Centre at York issued invitations to European Service Offices and listed below are the countries which attended. Included is the delegate from the Bulgaria who we were pleased to welcome for the first time.

<b>Austria</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>
<b>Belarus</b>	<b>Malta</b>
<b>Belgium (Flemish Speaking)</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>Norway</b>
<b>Croatia</b>	<b>Poland</b>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>Portugal</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	<b>Romania</b>
<b>Finland</b>	<b>Russia</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>Slovakia</b>
<b>German Speaking Europe</b>	<b>Slovenia</b>
<b>Great Britain</b>	<b>Spain</b>
<b>Greece</b>	<b>Sweden</b>
<b>Iceland</b>	<b>Switzerland (French Speaking)</b>
<b>Ireland</b>	<b>Turkey</b>
<b>Italy</b>	<b>Ukraine</b>
<b>Latvia</b>	

On Friday afternoon registration and reception took place which provided an ideal opportunity for the delegates to familiarise themselves with the venue, to renew friendships and to share with those delegates attending for the first time.

The Nineteenth European Service Meeting (ESM) was opened by the Chairman Michal S, with a moment's silence, followed by the reading of the European Service Meeting's Statement of Purpose. He welcomed all the delegates, the staff of the ESM including Roger Booth, General Secretary of the European Information Centre (EIC), and last but not least our special guests from GSO New York: International Desk – Mary Cumings, and the Publications Director – David Rosen.

Following the Welcome and Opening Address a presentation of the Twenty Fourth World Service Meeting (WSM) was given by Jürgen R (German Speaking Europe), this was followed by the Keynote Address which was presented by Mary Cumings, International Desk, GSO New York. Roger Booth, General Secretary, European Information Centre, also gave a short talk on the Financial Report.

There then followed individual presentations of country highlights which were given by one delegate from each country.

On Saturday delegates took part in the Committees and Workshops to share and discuss their experiences of service within their countries.

Reports were given from the Committee and Workshop Chairs detailing these discussions on Saturday afternoon (committees) and also on Sunday morning (workshops).

Two question and answer sessions were also held during the day with many interesting discussions. David Rosen, the Publications Director at GSO New York, answered questions on his time in the role and Roger Booth, General Secretary of the EIC also explained the decision to invite representatives from differing structures within Russia.

Saturday evening allowed a little time for relaxation with the Sharing meeting. Presentations were given by Fátima O (Portugal) and Lubomir B (Slovakia) on the Theme: “Anonymity in Service” and which was followed by sharing around the room.

On Sunday morning, elections were held to determine who would become Chair of the Twentieth European Service Meeting and we are pleased to welcome Rita M (Italy) to take up the position.

Lotus A (France) was elected to prepare and present a report on this Nineteenth European Service Meeting to the Twenty Fifth World Service Meeting which will take place in 2018. She will then report back on the Twenty Fifth WSM to the Twentieth ESM in 2018.

The Agenda Committee for the Twentieth European Service Meeting will consist of the following:

Rita M (Italy)	Chairman of Twentieth ESM
Roger Booth	General Secretary of EIC
Yury T (Ukraine)	Chair – Service Committee
Lotus A (France)	Chair – Recovery Committee
Anastasia R (Switzerland – French)	Chair – Unity Committee

The Agenda Committee will meet from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> July 2018 to discuss all questions forwarded to them via the EIC up until May 2018. The programme of the Twentieth European Service Meeting will be finalised and the Agenda set.

To finalise the weekend closing addresses were given by Dagur H (Iceland), Brit A (Norway), Jiří H (Czech Republic) and Anastasia R (Switzerland – French Speaking), 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.

David from New York made a presentation about the work of the Publications Department of AA World Services which was entertaining, informative and very well received.

Lastly, Michal our ESM Chair, gave a heartfelt address, expressing great hope as he 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 to close the 19<sup>th</sup> European Service Meeting all delegates formed a circle around the room and took turns to share the Serenity Prayer in their native language, and ending with all delegates sharing the Serenity Prayer in English as one.

## **Agenda Digest of the 19<sup>th</sup> European Service Meeting 2017**

### **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October**

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

### **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October**

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

### **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October**

Presentation & Discussion Workshop Reports  
20th European Service Meeting

- Time and Place
- Election of Chairman
- Election of ESM Delegate to prepare ESM Report for WSM 2018 and report back to the 20<sup>th</sup> ESM in 2018
- Formation of the Agenda Committee

Closing Addresses  
Close of 19th European Service Meeting 2017

# Opening Presentations

## **WELCOME ADDRESS**

### **“PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES”**

#### **CHAIR - MICHAL S, CZECH REPUBLIC**

My name is Michal and I am an alcoholic, from Czech Republic.

It is my utmost pleasure to welcome you all here at this 19<sup>th</sup> European Service Meeting.

Especially first term delegates and representatives from countries we have never had here before and I would like to thank to everyone from GSO staff, they are doing great job to make us all here feel welcome and comfortable.

I stand before you absolutely amazed and bewildered. It is not possible to just say that I am honoured to be here because it cannot fully explain the contrast and profound change of that desperate, lost and useless kid, I have been only ten years ago. One of the most overwhelming feelings, in those dark times before that closing but still not visible dawn of sobriety, was that I am utterly useless person. And it was this Fellowship and especially Service in it that gave me hope and chance to become useful again, to gain back some trust and responsibility. So yes, it truly is great honour and privilege to be here, it symbolizes for me that change I could have so kindly undergo by grace of God of my understanding and thanks to our Program.

It also gives me hope that I might be as ready as possible for my new role in life – becoming a father.

But enough about me and my feelings, our theme is after all, Principles before personalities.

Fellowship of AA is first and foremost a fellowship, a society of people, a community. But even as such it is compiled of individuals. Some more visible than others but all with importance. I think there is no coincidence that group of alcoholics decided to call themselves by what they are and at same time to stress the importance of their equality by saying upfront, we are anonymous.

This principle is vital for newcomer and his or her trust towards us, and yet probably even more for us, members in Service and everything we do for AA.

We have 12 steps to teach us how to be humble as individuals. And there are 12 traditions to guide us and help us to stay humble in our Service as well.

So, for my personal recovery I have simple kit of spiritual tools. And as fellowship we have our principles, such as: spirit of rotation, group conscience, anonymity. And if we use these tools there is lesser chance of our ego relapsing and taking over.

However, that sometimes happens anyway. Unfortunately, I don't have to talk only theoretically about this moreover I can actually start with my own AA history, because when I have got involved in Service for the first time I was far from sane and recovered (not that I am now, but getting there :-). Meaning that I was stuck and afraid to work on my inventory and therefore I have jumped into every possible Service. Well, in the end it helped me and I have not killed anyone but only thanks to some providence and luck.

Now I know that without being aware of my character defects and humble effort to work on them with help of my higher power and without honest desire to amend the harms done, it's hard, if even possible, to grasp and follow our principles contained in traditions.



In those early days, I did not care much about group conscience, that was only slowing me down, I knew better anyway and best if I do it all alone. So, I have made some decisions on behalf of my group or even AA as a whole without asking others and I went to places by myself “representing” AA.

As I said, luckily, I did not cause much damage and soon learned that if we do things together, if we discuss them and come to decision, then it’s the safest and most effective way of doing service and with authority higher than our own.

Then I am fortunate enough to have an opposite experience. I was member of the literature committee and living abroad, so I was not visible, most of the newer people did not even know me, I could have done my Service and work for AA totally in anonymity. We were working on new translation of Big Book, the biggest task we ever had, general membership had no idea who we are, that was not important, it was not about us, about any individual.

I have learned the difference in working with someone long before that however. When we have started our national AA magazine, we were only couple of editors, but it was a team and joy from our mutual work was dimensionally different.

So, if I should compare whether to try and do everything by myself, push it with my ego or rather be part of the team, listen to group conscience and do Service for service and not visibility, I know now what option feels right and is much more safe and prosperous for everyone.

As with most things, here I can start and make difference only with myself. Sadly, I have some experience which leads me to think if there really is no way how to help make sure that we always put principles before personalities? And doing that without using my own personality and ego? Of course, there is. And I would say the basic one nonetheless – sharing our experience. That we will do over this weekend full heartedly, I am sure, and then some more back in our home countries. Furthermore, by paying attention and talking about our Traditions and Concepts.

For someone it might seem obvious but I have to ask myself, how often do I share about the mistakes I have made to use it as a lesson? When is the last time I have referred to Traditions regarding some issue in Service? Or, do we know well enough about all the wisdom and pragmatic examples in Twelve Concepts?

Actually, allow me please to use few quotes right here, because I do think that our literature contains many answers.

In Concept IX. we can find Bill’s article from Grapevine, April, 1959, where he talks about importance of Leadership in AA, which is another great topic concerning importance of placing principles before personalities while still being effective thanks to the individuals who are in some areas of our Service necessary to act as leaders, but not forgetting what is in different excerpt from our literature: *"Our leaders do not drive by mandate, they lead by example." In effect, we are saying to them, "Act for us, but don't boss us."*

Yet, probably the most common text tying to our topic is Twelfth Tradition. This excerpt is from another Bill’s article published in Grapevine, this time from January, 1946: *"... we are beginning to feel that the word “anonymous” has for us an immense spiritual significance. Subtly but powerfully it reminds us that we are always to place principles before personalities; that we have renounced personal glorification in public; that our movement not only preaches but actually practices a true humility."*

Now I would like to share with you something I have heard about before and I am sure many of you are familiar with it as well, but I have fully discovered it only now in my research for this keynote and it underlines Bill’s statement enormously.

In January 1954, the Yale University decided to award Bill with an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws as a recognition for being co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous and all the miraculous work it has done so far.

After thorough consideration, discussions with other AA's and GSB, he decided, against his own notorious desire for personal achievements and recognition, to decline the degree. In his letter, besides many other things, he said: "The Tradition of personal anonymity and no honours at the public level is our protective shield."

And that is not all, afterwards some of his friends who knew about it, suggested that they should make a pamphlet with Yale correspondence as an example of maintaining anonymity on public level, Bill only replied: "Not while I'm alive. I don't want to capitalize on humility." Later he said it would be "ego manifestation". So, seven years after his passing Grapevine published the Yale correspondence, where we can see what a sacrifice it was on Bill's part and how modest about it he was afterwards while being honest and saying he would want nothing more than to accept the degree but he must think about the AA's future and safeguarding it.

Well, after this there is not much left to say, I think. We are so fortunate to have so many great examples from our history and in our literature. For me it's very simple, I need to remember that I should be grateful to AA, not AA to me. If I don't forget this and if I am willing to listen, to keep an open mind and try to always follow our Program and honour Traditions and Concepts, I may be of use to this great Fellowship and steer away from harming it.

Now I cannot wait to hear from all of you and to enjoy this weekend together in the Fellowship of the Spirit.

Welcome and thank you very much.

## **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

### **“PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES”**

#### **MARY CUMINGS – G.S.O. U.S./CANADA**

My name is Mary, I am an alcoholic and a grateful sober member of A.A. I have the privilege of serving as the staff member on the International Desk at the G.S.O. U.S./Canada. Thank you for allowing David and I to be here as observers. Members of our General Service Board, A.A. World Services and Grapevine Boards, as well as Staff and employees of G.S.O. and the Grapevine office extend deep gratitude to each of you for your service dedicated to A.A.'s primary purpose. I want to thank GSO Great Britain for your loving invitation to deliver the keynote address at our 19th European Service Meeting with its theme — Principles Before Personalities.

What a long way this is from my lonely apartment over the liquor store 29 years ago!

It was the custom at most of the groups in the community where I got sober to read the Twelve Traditions at the beginning of each meeting, but I confess I did not pay much attention to them in the early days of my sobriety. Then my estranged husband and his girlfriend started coming to my home group. I was incensed and called my sponsor to express my outrage that they would come to “my” group. She referred to Tradition Twelve and explained that I would have to put “principles before personalities” that they too had the right to get sober as guaranteed in Tradition Three. My sponsor knew that I needed specific instruction on how to apply the Traditions so she instructed me to continue attending my home group - I wanted to change groups - to treat them with courtesy and kindness, do not go and sit with them (!) but if I encountered them, welcome them as I would any newcomer, any fellow alcoholic.

As I continue to stay sober in A.A. my understanding of what it means to place principles before personalities has grown, but the basic purpose is still the same, to allow every alcoholic the opportunity to recover. Tradition Twelve, “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles over personalities.” The very first sentence of Bill’s essay on the Twelfth Tradition says, “The spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice. Because A.A.’s Twelve Traditions repeatedly ask us to give up personal desires for the common good, we realize that the sacrificial spirit – well symbolized by anonymity-is the foundation of them all.”

Each one of the Twelve Traditions requires sacrifice –

- we must put the group’s welfare ahead of our own desires
- we have to trust God instead of running the show ourselves
- we must welcome all newcomers who have a problem with alcohol regardless of what we think or feel about them
- we must place A.A.’s welfare above that of our own group
- we must practice humility in realizing that A.A. cannot be all things to all people
- we must remain independent of all outside affiliations
- we take responsibility for our own finances, supported only by voluntary contributions of members and maintain a policy of corporate poverty
- we acknowledge that sobriety is a spiritual gift, that we are not professionals, simply alcoholics who have found a way out and who are never paid for our Twelve Step efforts
- we give up our dependency on authority and power structures, depending on instead on the ultimate authority, a loving God expressed through the group conscience
- we rely on as little organization possible, with all those who serve being directly accountable to those they are serving

- we give up our cherished opinions on everything, even A.A.
- we give up our desire to “market” or “sell” A.A. and our desires for personal distinction

“Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public. As we lay aside these very human aspirations, we believe that each of us takes part in the weaving of a protective mantle which covers our whole Society and under which we may grow and work in unity.” Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

The Big Book reminds us that a mere code of morals is not sufficient, for this spiritual foundation to be strong and meaningful, it must be supported by spiritual actions. I am not capable of the degree of sacrifice the Twelve Traditions require unless I am actively practicing the spiritual actions of the Twelve Steps as a way of life. Only through this spiritual exercise is my ego reduced to right size, allowing me to make the sacrifices of pride and ego that each one of the Twelve Traditions requires. I cannot skimp on my A.A. program because of service related commitments. Working with other alcoholics and participating in a home group are perhaps even more important as we become immersed in service.

*Daily Reflections* shares this gem, “My sponsor told me that I should be a grateful alcoholic and always have “an attitude of gratitude”—that gratitude was the basic ingredient of humility, that humility was the basic ingredient of anonymity and that “anonymity was the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

I am the kind of alcoholic that finds it helpful to understand what the application of the spiritual principle of anonymity as the foundation of all of our traditions actually looks like in daily life. One of the great gifts of Alcoholics Anonymous is I have members of A.A. who show me how they apply the foundational principle of anonymity by placing principles before personalities.

I must bring an open mind and an open heart to the group conscience. Tradition Two says that, “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants.” Therefore, when we are developing the informed group conscience, we are seeking God’s will for A.A. In essence, we are taking the Eleventh Step together so I try to bring the same attitude to group conscience meetings and discussions as I do to my personal practice of the Eleventh Step. I have been challenged to listen as if I have no opinion.

“The A.A. Group” pamphlet offer this guidance, “On sensitive issues, the group works slowly—discouraging formal motions until a clear sense of its collective view emerges. Placing principles before personalities, the membership is wary of dominant opinions. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group arrives at a decision. The result rests on more than a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ count—precisely because it is the spiritual expression of the group conscience. The term ‘informed group conscience’ implies that pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before the group votes.”

In A.A., I learned we do not conduct campaigns to convince others of my point of view, on social media or at the coffee shop. Not that we cannot discuss ideas, issues and challenges but we must do it with the spirit of love and tolerance without no gossip or judgment of people, groups, service entities or even countries - what group they represent, area or who their sponsor or service sponsor is etc. or if their practice of the A.A. program differs from mine.

I must learn to respect and accept the group conscience even when I disagree. What does that look like? I must not try to undermine either the people on the “winning” side or the course of action that has been decided upon; in fact, I should support the group conscience. As active servants of A.A. I know that all of you, like me, have had many opportunities to put this into practice!

I give up the idea of being right or wrong, winning or losing and realize that there are simply different experiences and as many points of view as there are degrees in a circle. One of the most powerful demonstrations of placing principles before personalities was when I first saw members who had strong opposing points of view during the group conscience discussion, talking and laughing together at coffee after the meeting - no sulking, pouting, silent scorn or gathering forces!

I have learned to welcome spirited discussion of many diverse points of view and not use our spiritual tools as weapons. Useful debate seems to end when a particular point of view is labeled as “fearful, “spiritual” or “not spiritual” or when someone says, “this is what Bill or Bob would do or say about a particular issue.” I have learned to ask, “Help me understand” rather than “how did you come up with that?” And to share saying “this is my point of view.”

It is amazing what we can accomplish together if we do not care who gets the credit. Of course, in A.A. we are here by grace rather than virtue so the “credit” always belongs to A.A. and a power greater than ourselves. I have to set aside my desire for personal distinction and approval and become one of many, a worker among workers.

I used to think that placing principles before personalities was all about me being loving and tolerant of others, but as I have grown in sobriety and in service I find that the personality that most threatens my behaving in a principled way I find most challenging is my own.

When Bill first introduced the Twelve Traditions to the Fellowship in 1946, he stated, “But A.A. unity cannot automatically preserve itself. Like personal recovery, we shall always have to work to maintain it. Here, too, we surely need honesty, humility, open-mindedness, unselfishness, and above all – vigilance.” 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.

A.A. is a gift to each of us and each of us is responsible for A.A.’s future. We represent those who have gone before, who so masterfully communicated their vision of recovery, unity and service. Let us have the humility and courage to place principles before personalities. Let us “pass it on.”

“And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.”

## **PRESENTATION: REPORT ON THE 24<sup>TH</sup> WORLD SERVICE MEETING**

### **“ONE WORLD, ONE A.A., ONE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART”**

JÜRGEN R – GERMAN SPEAKING EUROPE

The 24<sup>th</sup> World Service Meeting (WSM) took place on October 23 through 27, 2016, at Hilton Westchester Hotel, Rye Brook, New York. There were participating 60 delegates, representing 41 countries or zones, where A.A. has a developed national structure or Service Office. The aim of the 24<sup>th</sup> WSM as the aim of all A.A. activity is “to carry the A.A. message to the still-suffering alcoholic, wherever in the world he or she may be...” For the first time, Paraguay and Slovakia were represented at the WSM. Presentations and workshops of the WSM centered around the theme “One World, One A.A., One Language of the Heart” and showed various aspects of the experiences made in many countries of A.A.’s Three Legacies of Recovery and Service.

At the opening session, Terrance Bedient, class A trustee and chair of the US/Canadian Service Board, warmly welcomed all attendants. In his opening speech, he, among a lot of exciting and thoughtful remarks, told us: “...(WSM) reflects the grounders vision that there would always be one consistent message – the message that A.A. would always be available for sick alcoholics, wherever they might be or whatever language they might speak.”

The keynote address was given by Jatta Kupias from Finland. She told us, that Finland is one of the most A.A.- covered countries in Europe together with the Irish one. All other European countries have fewer A.A. groups per population. She expressed in a moving manner that the stories found in the book “The Language of the Heart”, recently translated into Finnish and read now by Finnish A.A.s, lead to a reaction and influence at these A.A.s which is comparable to that of the original text: “These stories are about me, one world, one A.A. and one language of the heart.”

### **COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS AND ZONAL REPORTS**

In a number of sessions during the five days of the 24<sup>th</sup> WSM one delegate from each country or zone represented at the WSM provided service highlights from his own country. In addition delegates heard reports from Zonal Service Meetings which may also be very helpful for those countries in which a service structure is just growing up:

- Heather Zapeta from New Zealand reported about the 11<sup>th</sup> Asia-Oceania Service Meeting at Dubai
- Jürgen Reck from Germany gave a report on the 18<sup>th</sup> European Service Meeting held in York (GB), motto “Keep it simple”.
- Pedro Balderrama from Mexico gave information in his report on the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Americas (Redela) in Mexico City, motto “Redela: Uniting the Americas”.
- Shun Naidoo from South Africa presented a very moving report on the 7<sup>th</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting held in Johannesburg, motto: “Let it begin with me- A Gathering of Accountability”.

## **COMMITTEES-WORKSHOPS-PRESENTATIONS**

We had four committees:

### **1) Agenda**

As a theme for the 25<sup>th</sup> WSM the committee recommended “Our Twelve Traditions: A.A.’s Future in the modern World”.

The recommended topics for the 25<sup>th</sup> WSM (presentations/discussion) were:

- Old values for a modern A.A.
- Service: Investing in A.A.’s Future
- Literature and it’s Places in an Internet Environment
- Safety of the Vulnerable Member
- Share the Value of Tradition Four
- Attracting Members into Service
- Special Purpose Meetings

The following Workshop Topics also are proposed for the 25<sup>th</sup> WSM:

- How to use the Internet Wisely
- Country-to-Country Sponsorship
- Leadership in A.A.

### **2) Literature**

The committee accepted the A.A.W.S. report on the International Literature Fund. Delegates expressed the opinion that a more detailed report could be a valuable tool for WSM delegates trying to improve the financial situation on pending and forthcoming translation projects. The committee deliberated the following topics:

- Discuss the effectiveness of A.A. literature available in your country for carrying the A.A. message.
- What efforts are underway to make literature available for alcoholics in your country who don’t currently have literature available in their language?
- To what extent is your country’s literature available in formats other than print?
- How do finances affect your country’s capacity to carry A.A.’s message with literature?

Here, one delegate made a statement which seemed to be shared by nearly all attendants “We do what we can with what we have.”

### **3) Policy/Admissions/Finance**

The committee approved Paraguay’s, RSOAA of Russia’s and Slovakia’s requests to participate at the 24<sup>th</sup> WSM.

After careful and not too easy deliberation the committee recommended that an additional item be added after item 2 of the qualifications for countries participating in the WSM to read: “In the case where more than one structure from a country applies to participate in the World Service Meeting, and where a license to distribute A.A. literature has been granted to those service structures, only the structure that holds the A.A.W.S. license can apply.”

There was a suggestion to increase the WSM delegate fee from US \$ 1,500 to US \$ 1,750 beginning with the 25<sup>th</sup> WSM. After extensive discussion, the committee declined to forward a recommendation regarding the WSM delegate fee.

#### **4) Working with Others**

The committee discussed the following topics.

##### **A.A. and technology**

It was among other facts reported, that there are various challenges in keeping A.A. traditions especially in terms of anonymity when utilizing new technologies.

##### **A.A. Online**

There are some kind of online A.A. activities for instance:

- Online meetings including those with video chat functions or for the purpose of connecting Loner members
- Online meeting finders
- Communicate with members and professionals in a timely fashion
- Online technology as a valuable communications tool between the groups and their GSB
- Online communication helpful for board discussions when GSB members live at far distances from each other

##### **Welcoming the Newcomer and Longtime Members**

##### **Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC)**

Misinformation about A.A. sometimes occurs. For example Professionals may say “Go to A.A. for a while”. They may not fully understand that although membership is voluntary, our experience to lend is that we have found alcoholism to be a lifelong illness. Most countries agreed that literature especially published for the professionals is beneficial.

##### **Introducing A.A. into countries where A.A. is emerging**

There for country-to-country sponsorship is very helpful and countries at one time being receivers of A.A. services now are able to pass on to other emerging countries what was passed to them.

#### **SITE SELECTION COMMITTEE**

After thorough review of the specifications of each bid, the committee recommended that the site of the 25<sup>th</sup> WSM (2018) be South Africa (Durban) and that the alternate site be Ireland.

#### **THERE WERE THREE WORKSHOPS**

##### **Workshop I**

*Theme: Resentment: What does it Mean for Individual Recovery and for Group Survival?*  
One of the topics shared in this workshop was: Inventory-taking requires being open; just like individuals need to take a periodic personal inventory, so do our groups, regions districts and GSB. Conducting an inventory demonstrates a certain stage of growth.

##### **Workshop II**

*Theme: Communication Between the Generations: Are we Succeeding in Carrying the Message?*  
it was shared that it is highly important for maintaining a consistent A.A. message, to understand and utilize A.A.'s Twelve Traditions, A.A. literature, share experience and sponsorship. All of our communications across the generations are focused on our single reason for being: to stay sober and to carry the A.A. message to the alcoholic in need.



### **Workshop III**

*Theme: The Spirituality of Our Financial Contributions*

Money itself has no spirituality. The spirituality arises by those things we can do with money: Go with the bus or a taxi to an alcoholic in need, study the text of the Big Book bought for this purpose with a sponsee, sponsor the attendance of a delegate at the WSM or ESM and so on ..... Seventh Tradition contributions can be thought of as a duty. With an understanding of the spiritual value of the Seventh Tradition, contributing can also become a joy.

### **PRESENTATIONS**

The themes of the 22 presentations were spread over our whole A.A. message. We heard and after the presentation shared on a lot of topics:

- Country – to – Country Sponsorship
- A.A. without frontiers: Many languages ,many cultures, one unique message
- From recovery without ego and pride comes true leadership.
- The A.A. home group – the spiritual foundation of our recovery
- A.A. service and spirituality
- Fellowship (the meeting after the meeting)
- Social media and A.A.

### **CLOSING TALK**

In his closing talk, Terrance Bedient reminded us all of the spirituality of our fellowship. As members of A.A. we live this spirituality as an attachment to a larger unity: our Higher Power. The WSM has had its focus on how to reach the still-suffering alcoholic. Terrance told us “Each of us has an obligation to those not yet here by keeping the meeting doors open to those who need A.A. so desperately, no matter who they are or what their background is.”

And so, at the end, I found myself as one alcoholic among others in the great circle formed by all attendants of the 24<sup>th</sup> WSM speaking the Serenity Prayer in 34 languages. Thank you, my fellowship of A.A., for sending me to the WSM and so having got the opportunity to learn again so much about the attachment of us all to the Higher Power and about our main purpose, to bring the A.A. message to the still suffering alcoholic.

Thank you all for listening!

# 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", 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, 3 Polish and 1 Slovenian. The 185 groups with approx. 2200 members flourish well. The English and Polish speaking meetings are in Vienna, the Slovenian in Carinthia.

## 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, from there the leftover goes 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. In Austria we maintain 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 (if possible). All the contacts 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 2017 the GSAA-Convention in Lübeck had to be cancelled because of construction work at the convention centre. So the group in Leoben, Styria, Austria decided to organize an "Alpine Convention" for the South of GSAA, for the countries that are parts of the Alps. As topic we chose "From I to We", so service was our aim. About 550 members of AA and Al-Anon attend this convention, and as usually they loved it.

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

This year the grill-party at the Danube was a big success for the second time.

Nearly every year there are local "birthday parties" for single groups that celebrate 5, 10, 20, 25 or 30 years of their existence. These are always mentioned in the local media as well.

## Literature

AA Austria/South Tyrol uses the literature of GSAA.

## **Internet**

AA-Austria has an own homepage: <http://www.anonyme-alkoholiker.at>, where we also have a calendar for internal Austrian AA-affairs promoting communication, quick sharing of coming events, downloads of service material, etc. We have about 180 visitors on our homepage per day.

## **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, Austria and South Tyrol. The name is built of the initial letters of D for Deutschland (Germany), A for Austria, CH for Switzerland. Friends from Austria/South Tyrol are working for DACH, and many others send their contributions for this meeting in print.

## **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, Croatia, the 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. We have created a spot for TV that seems to be well liked.

# **BELARUS**

## **Conference**

A.A. initially appeared in Minsk, Belarus, in April 1990, although the First General Service Conference was not held until 2003. Since that year the Conference has been held annually in October.

## **Groups**

Currently A.A. Belarus comprises 92 groups. Most of these groups are located in major populated towns (just in the capital city of Minsk alone, where the Belarusian A.A. office is, twenty A.A. groups are based), few groups are in villages. The total number of members in the groups is estimated at approximately 2000 people.

## **General Service Board**

In 2010, the Conference decided to convert the General Service Board into the Board of Trustees. It also delegated to the Board oversight of "Alcoholics Anonymous Central Service," the official representative of A.A. Belarus. At present, the Board of Trustees consists of nine members: six trustees from the regions and three general service trustees who are also the trustees of the Central Office. The number of trustees is regulated by the needs of the Fellowship.

## **A.A. Belarus Service Centre**

In 2006, the A.A. Belarus Service Centre was registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus as a public organization. The Centre has been employing an executive director and an accountant since. Over the last four years, due to rising rent prices, we had to move the office three times. Group donations cover barely half of the Centre's expenses, and helpline and e-mail calls are answered around the clock by volunteers.

## **Committees**

The Board of Trustees has four committees: Regional Service, Public Information, International and Correctional Facilities. Other committees are not working yet.

## **Public Information**

The PI work is carried out through the press, the radio and the Internet. The information about A.A. is provided on the public transport, in pharmacies and health services. We also inform priests. A lot of meetings take place in temples and churches. In major cities A.A. members paste A.A. advertisements with contact numbers on designated notice-boards and distribute our business cards. The Committee is helping groups with round table sessions and presentations at local levels. Many groups celebrate their anniversaries and always invite professionals and the clergy.

The national website provides all the necessary information about the Fellowship so that suffering alcoholics or people interested in A.A. can reach us.

## **International**

The International Committee's main focus is maintaining good communication, sharing experience between our GSO and other structures and preparing delegates for WSM, ESM and different international events. "The International bulletin" printed and distributed by the Committee shares information about A.A. events held around the world.

A few A.A. members with the knowledge of English and a good length of sobriety has joined the Committee recently and are helping to start an English-speaking A.A. group in Minsk.

### **Correctional Facilities**

The members of our fellowship cooperate with corrective labour colonies, settlement-type corrective establishments, prisons and other correctional facilities. These days we carry the A.A. message to two prisons in different cities, two male and one female compulsory rehabilitation centres for convicts, 2 male and one female settlement-type correctional facilities. There are no A.A. groups behind the walls yet but we are actively cooperating with the administration and hope to open a Big Book study group in one of the correctional facilities in the nearest future.

### **Literature**

Over a period of four years starting in 2003, G.S.O. (U.S./Canada) helped us in acquiring A.A. literature in Russian for the establishment and development of the A.A. structure in Belarus. We are most grateful for this help.

From 2006 till 2014 we cooperated with the Russian A.A. Office in the publishing of A.A. literature. In 2014, A.A. Belarus got a license for the publication and distribution of A.A. literature in Russian in the Republic of Belarus, and last year A.A. Belarus published its first 1.000 paperback copies of Alcoholics Anonymous and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions 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**

At present, approximately 20% of our expenses are covered with group contributions and 80% with the proceeds from literature sales. The efforts are being made to raise awareness among the membership of the services provided by the GSO. Our national website shows monthly and yearly financial reports of the Office so anyone can see where the money goes.

## BELGIUM (FLEMISH SPEAKING)

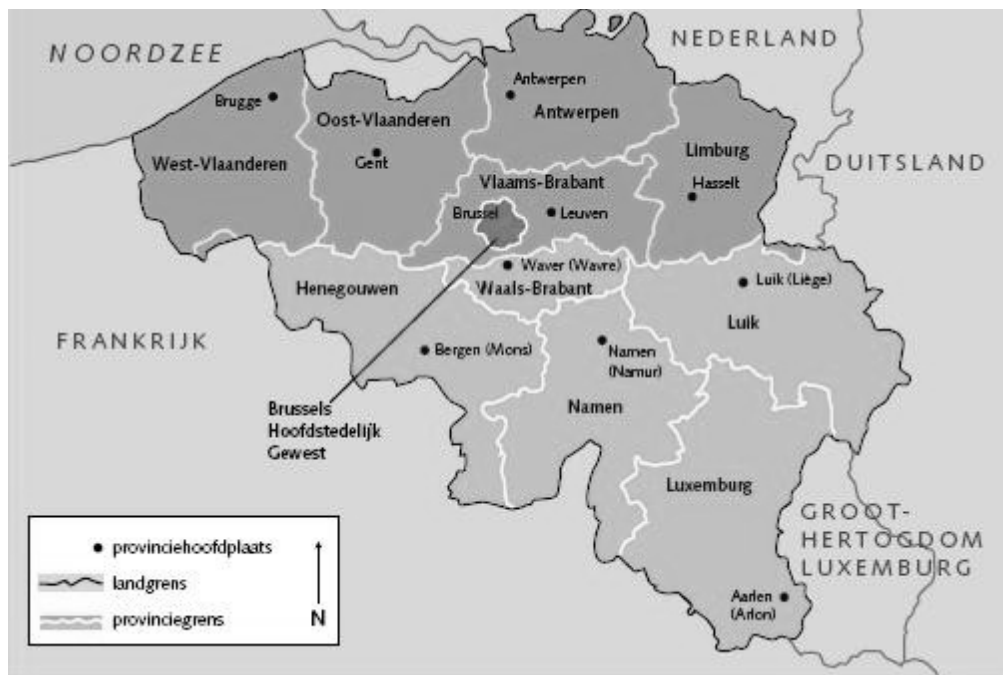
### Geographical situation

Belgium is a country with 3 different Regions, which territories are linked to the languages spoken:

Flemish Region	language Flemish (Dutch)
Northern part of Belgium Walloon Region	language French & German
Southern part of Belgium Brussels Capital Region	language Flemish & French & ...

Brussels – 19 communities

AA Flanders is for all Flemish (Dutch) speaking persons who live in the Flemish Region of Belgium. In this way, this is not really a country report because AA Flanders does not cover the whole Belgian territory.



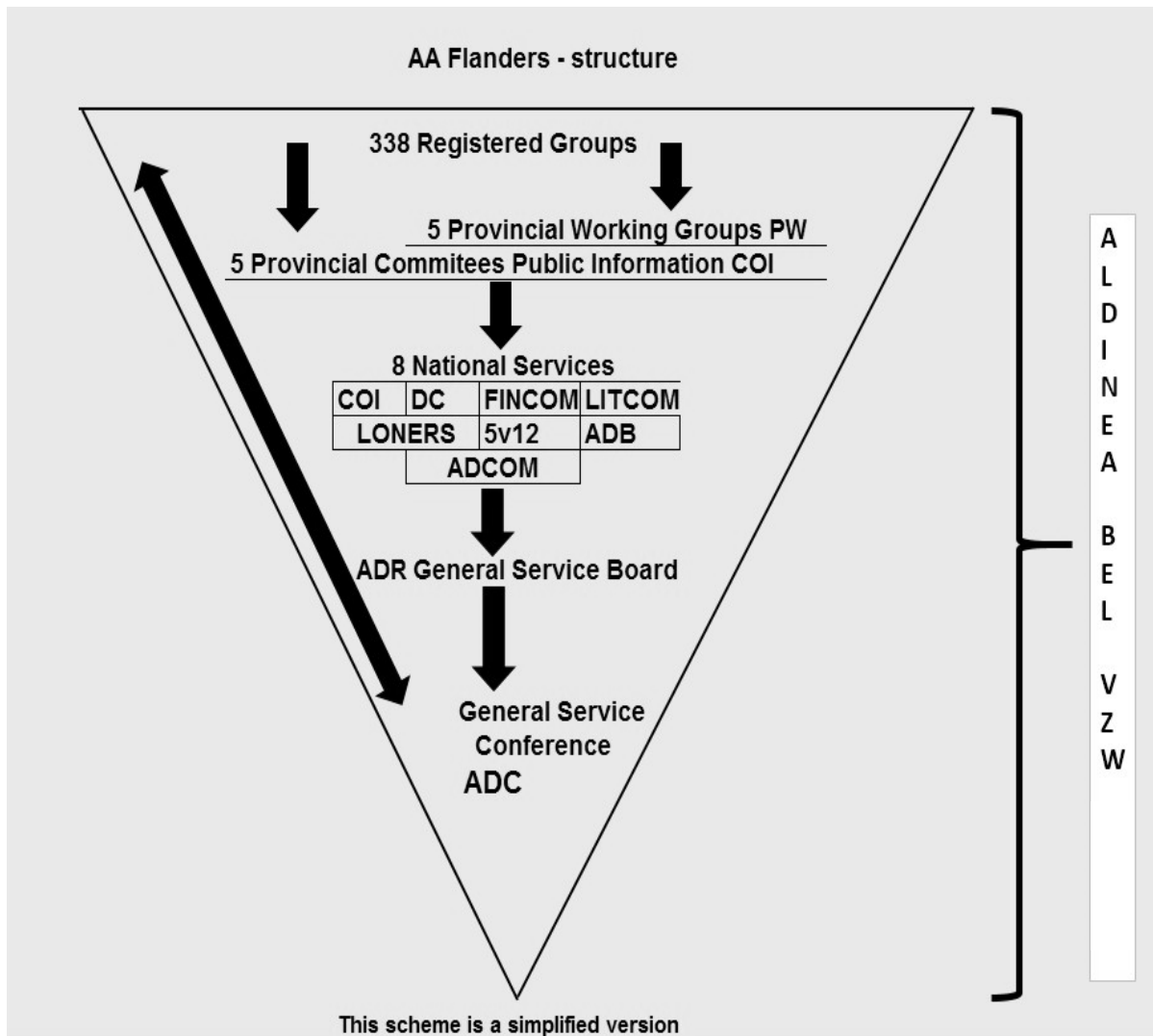
Flanders has 5 provinces in which 338 Registered Groups are operating. This stands for 409 meetings per week.

Provinces	Groups	Meetings
Antwerpen	67	99
Limburg	26	27
Oost-Vlaanderen	79	93
Vlaams-Brabant & Brussels	45	64
West-Vlaanderen	121	126
	<b>338</b>	<b>409</b>

Each Registered Group can send delegates to the PW = Provincial Working Group and provincial COI = Service for Public Information. Each Registered Group has a vote.

These 5 PW's should be considered as the pivots, who carry/support the rest of the structure of AA Flanders.

## Structure of AA Flanders



The ALDINEA BEL vzw is an association without a lucrative purpose, also called a non-profit association. The association acts as a corporate body to represent and manage the business of AA. Every AA person is a member of this association by default. The General Meeting of ALDINEA BEL is composed by 10 AA members (2 of each province) and 2 Class A Trustees.

The association is managed by a Board of 4 members: One class A Trustee (non AA member), two Class B Trustees (AA members) and the Secretary/Treasurer (also an AA member).

The association is also responsible for the operation of the ADB – **General Service Office**. The ADB is located in a house in Berchem near Antwerp, where we rent 2 floors. There is one Full Time employee (non AA member) whose job is a.o. to answer the phone, sending information to whom it asked for and act as a liaison officer between members, services and the non-profit organisation. Service meetings take place here. There is a meeting room with a capacity of 15 persons.



## **The National Service Committees**

### **ADCOM – Admission Committee**

Responsible for the organisation of the biennial General Service Conference (ADC) and also general oversight of the operations of the service committee within the Flemish speaking AA.

### **COI – Committee for Public Information**

While “carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic” will always remain our main objective, this Service plays an important role in our organisation. That is also the reason why this Service works on a provincial as well as national level. The main task is to provide information about AA and the recovery programme to the public in general and to people involved professionally in Healthcare in general or fighting alcoholism in particular.

This Service uses various means to achieve this, such as open meetings, visiting schools to discuss the problems regarding alcoholism, meetings in prisons, rehab and so on. It goes without saying that members of this Service are well informed about AA Traditions.

Another concern of this Service is constantly seeking up to date ways of communications to reach the right audience. They cannot use the AA language which is spoken among AA members but they need to present the message in words and images that is understood by and attracts the target group. Matters like these are discussed on a regular base.

The internet workgroup is responsible for the maintenance of our website and is also working on improvements like online registration for weekends or online web shopping. There is also a private part for members only, where one can consult all minutes of meetings.

Please visit us on [www.aavlaanderen.org](http://www.aavlaanderen.org)

### **DC – Distribution Centre**

This Service is responsible for the distribution of AA literature and the monthly magazine “Five before 12”. Each province has its own members and a stock of AA literature, brochure, flyers, leaflets,... Distribution can be per mail but in many cases, DC members will bring orders to the bimonthly held meetings of the Provincial Working Groups or provincial COI.

AA Flanders has also recently developed an online webstore. We exchange also orders with our neighbours from the Netherlands.

### **FINCOM – Financial Committee**

This Service monitors all financial transactions. All 5 provincial treasures are default part of this Service. This is the place where money and spirituality each need their proper place. FINCOM also encourages the groups to understand the need to support our structure and the meaning of the Seventh Tradition.

The means are mainly coming from:

- Contributions of the Registered Groups.
- Sales of literature and magazine “5 before 12”
- The yearly held “Landdag” (Convention) who is alternately organised by the provinces.

## LITCOM – Literature Committee

This Service is involved in all aspects of our literature:

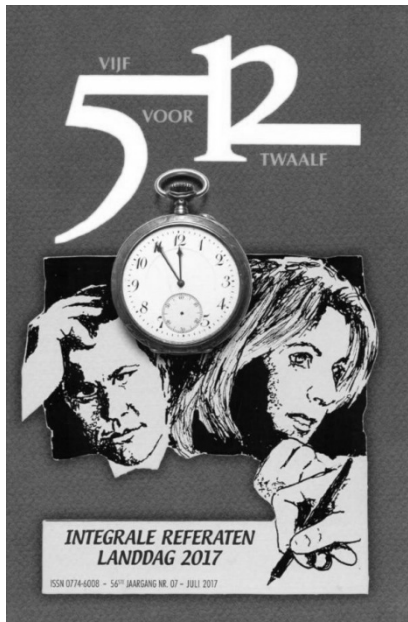
When something needs to be re-edited because of low stock, LITCOM will update first the content. Removing typing errors and updating language to the actual standards (language evolves fast!)  
New assets: LITCOM takes care of the translation of AA literature. One of the last realizations was the translation of “Dr. Bob and the Oldtimers”.

At this moment, AA Flanders has a selection of 37 titles of AA Conference Approved literature.

## LONERS – Committee for written meetings

Some people cannot attend AA- meetings for several reasons (illness, travelling or simply due to the fact that they are in prison or rehab). In these cases, one can participate in a “written meeting”. The loners are responsible for the content of the bimonthly magazines they make and they stay in contact with their members via questions and answers.

## 5v12 – Committee for editorship magazine “5 before 12”



Already 56 volumes have been edited by AA Flanders. This magazine has 10 numbers per year and is fully supported by texts which we receive from our members.

Articles published cover personal testimonies, interpretations of steps or traditions, theme of the month...

The middle pages cover announcements about open meetings, conventions, weekends etc. New for this year is the fact that we have also 30 subscriptions from the Netherlands.

## ADR the General Service Board/Council

The GSB supports and encourages every person in carrying out the resolutions, decided at the ADC (General Service Conference). The GSB ratifies the minutes of the meetings of the national service committees and can ask for extra actions if necessary.

Structural changes can only be decided by the General Service Conference, but if there should occur an urgent matter which cannot wait until the next Conference, the Board can make a temporary decision when a 2/3 majority of the votes is in favour. On the next Conference, the delegates will have the final decision.

The following persons participate in the Board with right to vote:

- Chair - Class A Trustee
- Member - Class A Trustee
- Secretary / AA member
- Member - Class B Trustees
- Member - The national delegates from each Service Committee

The following persons participate in the Board with a consultative voice:

- The Secretary/Treasurer of the non-profit association Aldinea Bel
- The Employee of the ADB (General Service Office)
- The delegates for the EDO (European Service Meeting) The delegates for the WDO (World Service Meeting)
- The ADC – General Service Conference

AA Flanders has already gone through 20 Conferences. The last one was held in March 2016 and the next will be in March 2018. Every Conference has a theme and in 2016 this was “Keep it simple”

The final report is edited by the Adcom Service and is available online. A printed document has been sent to all groups and delegates.

These General Service Conferences are the “Parliament of AA” and the delegates discuss, study and vote on all relevant matters which has been brought forward.

The Conference is attended by ± 70 persons and also by Observers from other countries like the Netherlands and the UK.

## **Challenges**

Today, people live fast and are more focusing on their freedom as an individual. We face problems because in AA, things do not change so fast and it takes sometimes a long period before something is decided. Are we like the Ents in the Lord of the Rings?

Groups are autonomous and some work according to their own rules. Talking about the 12 Traditions during a meeting becomes rather rare, the 12 Steps are sometimes used in a non-AA way. You could say that some groups mix up the meaning of independency and autonomy.

The Services are understaffed. This is dangerous for the proper functioning of AA.

In these modern times, more and more people come to meetings after consulting the website without notice or pre-advice. This requires another approach by the groups, who are used to make home visits as a 12th step work, in order to have the first contact.

How shall we spread our message and Traditions as adequate as possible in these days? (an unchanged Message in a changing world).

# BULGARIA

## Groups and Meetings

There are 25 groups of AA in Bulgaria, 10 years ago there were only 4 groups. Meetings are held in 15 cities, with 57 meetings per week. There are 2 English-speaking meetings and 2 on-line meetings.

## Structure

In 2009, the first workshop with representatives of AA groups in Bulgaria was held. The meeting was about how to serve together. After 2009, workshops for service took place annually in Bulgaria until our First Conference in 2017. 2 years before our First Conference, at a workshop in 2015, it was decided to set up a virtual office, AA Bulgaria non-profit association and Public Relations Committee (from 2016 including prison service), Finance Committee, Literature Committee, Events Committee, Committee on the drafting of the Charter of Conference and Service Manual.

## CSO

There is currently only a virtual office with this address:  
 Central Service Office Of A.A.  
 Office 14  
 71, Zahari Knyajeski Str  
 Stara Zagora City 6000, Bulgaria

## Conference

Although AA in Bulgaria has been in existence since 1989, the first AA Conference took place this year. It was attended by:

- Delegates from 12 groups out of 25 in the country, 3 of the founders of the non-profit association "AA Bulgaria" formed in 2015 - all with the right to vote;
- Chairperson of the association, committee chairs (literature, finance, PR, events, drafting of the Charter of Conference and Service Manual) - non-voting;
- Observers from different groups in the country without voting rights.
- The reports of each committee on their work from 2015 until now were heard.
- It was decided to form three regions in the country - Western, Central and Eastern, to be represented at the next conference in June 2018 by 3 delegates from each region.
- Each Region should have one Trustee. In addition two or three trustees from the whole of the country will be nominated and elected.
- The Charter of Conference was voted.
- An editor of the newspaper, an international delegate and international delegate's alternate were elected.

## Committees

*Public Relations Committee.* The main task of this committee is to provide information about AA to the public and to professionals who are involved in the problems of alcoholism. The Committee provides the necessary information to media representatives, social workers, healthcare professionals, psychologists, psychiatrists, probation officers and municipal prevention centers through invitations to open meetings, flyers with addresses and telephone numbers of all AA groups in Bulgaria, articles printed in the media and on-line publications, participation in national and regional TV shows, meetings with employers.

*Finance Committee.* This Committee takes care of spending of the funds collected in the account of AA Bulgaria in accordance with the instructions of Conference and prior to this according to the recommendations of the Structure preparing the Conference. Amounts in association "AA Bulgaria" come mostly from the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition of the groups and those derived from donations from individual members of AA. In addition, we receive receipts from sales of the Big Book and from events we organize such as the annual National Convention. Funds from 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition come from 11 out of 25 groups in the country. The money in AA Bulgaria's account is low. As a conclusion, it can be said that there are not enough regular receipts, so the tendency is money to be spent only on carrying the message and printing of literature and brochures.

*Literature Committee.* This committee is responsible for the translation and distribution of AA literature. Approval of the translation of the Big Book was requested and received by GSO New York in 1993. In 2016 the committee sent a letter by e-mail requesting the permission of translation and printing of the books "Living Sober" and "12 Steps 12 Traditions" as well as the brochure "This is AA." The approval was received in May 2017.

*Prisons Committee.* Carrying the message in Prisons began in May 2014 when first meeting is held in Stara Zagora prison. The liaison with prison staff was made through Dr. Dobrinov, our friendly psychiatrist, head of a psychiatric department in the largest state psychiatric hospital in Bulgaria. Dr. Dobrinov is also one of the founders of AA Bulgaria Association - a non-alcoholic. In the same year the prison service in Sofia began, and in 2016 the prison in Pleven, as a result of the personal contacts of our fellow with the prison director of this town, and an open meeting with the participation of friends from Russia and members of the Fellowship in Bulgaria. In 2017 letters have been sent to the only female prison in Bulgaria - in Sliven. AA literature has been supplied to them.

*Events Committee.* It was originally created for the organization of the annual National Convention, open meetings and seminars. It was subsequently recommended by the committee itself with the commitment to remain the only organizational committee of National Conventions, workshops and the Conference. The seminars were organized successfully by the host regions.

*Committee on the drafting of the Charter of Conference and Service Manual.* The Committee was specifically formed for the preparation of these projects. The Charter was examined and, after a series of amendments, passed and voted at the Conference. The Service Manual is still under development and the committee will continue work on it until the next Conference in 2018.

## **Website**

The site <http://www.aa-bg.info> was born 7 years ago. From March 2016 the domain of the site is owned by the non-profit association "AA Bulgaria". The hosting of the site is also paid by "AA Bulgaria" in order to keep AA's traditions of self-support and non-accession to the Internet. The contact form of the site is linked to the e-mail of the association: [aa\\_bulgaria@abv.bg](mailto:aa_bulgaria@abv.bg)

The e-mail is served by several people and responds to inquiries and requests for help. Information on groups in the site is as up-to-date as possible - in Bulgarian and English.

Through the "Our Friends" section, the site is linked to:

- Anonymous Alcoholics in the European Region: <https://alcoholics-anonymous.eu/>
- Alcoholic Anonymous sites worldwide: <https://alcoholics-anonymous.eu/aa-general-service-office-websites-worldwide/>
- AA Grapevine International Journal.
- Another activity was the creation of listing information for groups to appear on Google Maps and Google+.

## **AA Newspaper**

In December 2014 the first edition of the newspaper "Groz dov sok" (Grape Juice) published by group "Priyateli" (Friends) in Sofia. In 2017 at the last workshop before the first Conference, the same group proposed that the newspaper be the official edition of AA in Bulgaria. This was adopted by Conference.

## **National Convention**

This year, the 10th National Convention was held under the slogan "Keep It Simple", with the international participation of AA friends from Germany, Slovakia, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom, Czech, Russia and Moldova, as well as with AI-Anon and ACA participation.

## **Relationship to other countries**

Close relationships and experience sharing are gained from Poland, Slovakia and the UK. In 2010, for the first time we invited guests from AA in Slovakia and Poland to a service working meeting to share their experience, strength and hope for service and worldwide services. Since then, we have an invitation and participation to the Polish Conference, in which we attended the regional AA meeting for Central and Eastern Europe, which is held alongside the Polish Conference.

Particularly strong support with experience we received from the Fellowship in Poland through their invitation to attend Prison Service Seminars in Burzenin in 2016 and Katowice in 2017. A group of 10 Poles visited our prisons and participated in the seminar module held during this year's AA Bulgarian Convention.

In April this year, two observers from Poland shared their experience and took part in the working seminar in preparation for our First Conference.

The GSO in York responded to our request and sent two observers who shared invaluable experience and gave their support to our First Conference.

We are grateful for the support from AA Great Britain ensuring our attendance at their General Service Conference since 2016 and participation for the first time at the ESM.

# CZECH REPUBLIC

## Groups and Membership

In the Czech Republic there are currently active 67 AA groups in the 40 cities. There is also one registered Skype Czech-Slovak AA group included in overall number of groups. Membership counts approximately over 600 members.

Most of the groups are smaller, having only one meeting per week. However, in bigger cities are more meetings in week and in some cases even every day and sometimes more than one.

## General Service Conference

Our General Service Conference is held annually, usually in January, for two days. This year (2017) it started on Friday already so it took 3 days in total. We newly put in to agenda Committees Meetings, they worked as usually (regular working meeting) and delegates could participate (as observants) on their debates. Not all groups are represented by their delegates, but attendance is growing every year. We invited foreign observers from another countries outside of Slovakia and Poland (these countries participate traditionally). Newly we were pleased by visit and active participation of delegates also from Bulgaria, Finland and Ukraine.

## The General Service Board

Between Conferences authority and responsibility are vested in the Board of Trustees (GSB), which has 7 members usually from different parts of country when most of them are involved in the service Committees, such as the Literature Committee, the PI Committee newly also Finance Committee etc. All our trusted servants in each area of service are AA members. We had our first classes-A trustees, however she declined voting rights and was serving more as a consultant (no change – same like last 2-3 years).

Recently, we were facing unpleasant issue. One of Trustee made errors in Finance planning of Annual Convention of CZ AA and he wasn't able to explain these errors and missing money. Due to this and due to lack of communication, Boar of Trustees decided to dismiss him from the membership of PI Committee. He was also dismissed from the Board of Trustees by his own. This situation has become a great lesson for the Czech AA.

## GSO

In 2015 we establish new office in Hradec Kralove where we pay rent and getting started to use the space, it will serve as a storage of literature as well.

## Service Handbook

SH Committee started to work intensively this year on historically the very first version of Handbook for Czech AA. After a couple of years of struggling in this area it seems that the Service Manual should be introduced and spread to usage during General Service Conference in January 2018.

## Finance

The financial committee has been established at the beginning of this year. Its main purpose is to create financial budget for the following fiscal year and support board of trustees in making decisions related to unexpected expenses. The very first official budget for the fiscal year Feb 2018 till Jan 2019 will be created by the end of this year.

The budget to be approved by the end of January at the national service conference. Rough estimation of budget composition: 60-70 % is from literature income, 30-40 % made from 7th tradition. The literature income growing year over year due to publishing of new retranslated Big Book in 2016.

## Literature

In general – Literature Committee introduce the list of literature and discuss during GSC with delegates what is the Czech AA needs, what groups would like to have translated. Based on voting the priority list is set up.

In 2016-2017 we have published:

- New third edition of "Alcoholics Anonymous" with 15 Czech stories, own Czech Forewords and completely revised translation, with license and approval from GSO NY and we covered all related costs for the very first time – 5000 pcs.
- Brochure "Many Path to Spirituality" published in January 2016 – 3000 pcs.
- Licensed E-version of Big Book – placed in the website of Czech AA (available only for reading)
- Brochure "Speaking at non-AA meetings" published in April 2017 – 3000 pcs.

Currently work on and upcoming plans:

- We are currently working on the book "We Came to Believe" – to be published until the end of 2017
- We got the translation license for the book "Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers" – to be translated in 2018.
- We are working on different kind of brochures – the very first translation or re-translation.

## Public Information

Among the professionals we are getting to be more known and accepted, proof of it is our better cooperation with Treatment facilities and doctors. The biggest step seems to be our regular attendance at various Addictology conferences where we have a chance to present our Fellowship, Program and even show classical open AA meeting. We have had arrange several events for members of clergy, who gladly and with interest have attended them and it seems we can freely continue to do PI work in this area. AA was also invited to represent itself at multiple social services assemblies. And we are happy to have long term cooperation with few high schools where we are regularly throwing PI meetings. We set up the cooperation with Prison Opava after long term preparation also thanks to help of AA Poland. Possible collaboration with another Prison (Vinarice) is in progress in these days. Regular info-meetings are in alcoholic bed-care clinics. Regular AA meetings also started in the treatment centres (Prague)

## Communications

Some of our members are regular attendants of foreign Conventions and Conferences. We are also always inviting members from other countries to our Convention. We also have a good and solid relationships with friends in Poland and Slovakia.

## Closing

We really appreciate continuing support from AA Great Britain ensuring our attendance at their General Service Conference and participation at the ESM and WSM.



## DENMARK

### General Service Board (GSB)

The GSB consist of a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Secretary, a Business Manager and a 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 of them obliged to meet or send a substitute to the board meetings. GSB meets every third month at our General Service Office in Copenhagen, or in one of the other Regions. The standing committees are represented in GSB by one person from each committee. Members who want to be part of a standing committee have to request it from GSB and will receive an answer of their request from them. Each standing committee has between 5 -10 members, with the exception of the Telephone and Email Committee.

The Standing Committees are:

Box334 (national magazine), Information Technology (IT), Public Information (LIV), Literature, Service Handbook, Telephone and Email, Economy and finally Service Conference Committee.

### General Service Office (GSO)

The current General Service Office (GSO) situated in Copenhagen opened in May 1999. Literature sales, production and distribution volunteers do their work from the GSO. Many of the committees and the Copenhagen Region held their meeting at our GSO. We have not been able to elect a treasurer for the last three years, instead we have a Business Manager at our General Service Office in Copenhagen.

### General Service Conference

The Danish General Service Conference is held each year in April. We had 77 participants this year, 57 of whom were voting members. This year the conference took place from Saturday morning until Sunday afternoon in a new location, but on the same island, Funen. The Service Conferences Committee and people from the GSO prepare and coordinate the last details Friday afternoon. The regional delegates are all elected for a period of four successive years without the possibility to be re-elected. The regional delegates need to have two thirds of the votes on the Service Conference. Besides our usually working four committees we also have workshops. The four committees are Media, Service, Economic and Visions. Like the British Service Conference, we manage to write and distribute the report before our Conference is over. The Service Conference has a meeting with the **newly** elected Service Conference, directly after the Conference. This is the start for the new General Service Conference's members. At a meeting in General Service Board we have decided it will make most sense to send the Vice Chairman of the Service Conference to visit the General Service Conference in York, England.

### Meetings and Groups

We have 440 meetings in our official meeting list. A few groups have started having more than one meeting. Meetings and groups are still not well distinguished. Six meetings are held in English, in three different cities. Two meetings are in Greenlandic language and four meetings are in Icelandic. There is one meeting in Spain and three in Thailand, which are conducted in Danish. There are now two meetings on the internet also in Danish.

## **Regions**

AA Denmark is divided into six regions. The groups elect Group Service Representatives (GSR) to meet at Service Meetings in their own region. 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. In the last few years some regions have not been able to send the right number of delegates to the Service Conference. All Regions have created a Service Manual. The Regions build up their service structure, similar to that of the AA National.

Furthermore, the Regions have strengthened the public information service throughout the country. They cooperate through the National Public Information Committee.

Finally, they divide the work of the GSB representative and the chairman of the Region into two service representatives.

## **Working Committees and Service Units**

A large number of AA members are doing voluntary work in the working committees and service units. Actually all work is done only by non-paid AA members. Chairman is 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 previous three years. At the moment our reserve 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. We are also selling less literature. All committees are requested to make up a budget for the year.

## **Literature**

Most basic AA literature, brochures, and pamphlets, are translated to Danish and sold from our General Service Office. We have decided to make most pamphlets free of charge permanently. All books in Danish have now been recorded. The CD's are sold in addition to the written literature. The literature committee is still in the process of revising the Big Book and the Twelve Concepts. BOX334 is our nationwide magazine, which has been circulated since the beginning of the 1990's. It is now possible to pay with Visa card in our bookshop.

## **Public Relations**

Denmark is in the process of strengthening efforts regarding information. One of the important tasks is to develop our national website. As many activities as possible are to be carried out on a regional level, but in order to co-ordinate the efforts and increase efficiency, the National Committee is comprised of one member from each of the six regions.

For many years we have had a nationwide telephone service, with some advisers taking calls at their home and some at the General Service Office. The telephone service has one telephone number covering all of Denmark, and the calls are routed either to the member closest to the caller, or to one of the members of the GSO. We have a telephone system which is connected to mobile phones so calls can be answered from each part of the country. The service is available seven days a week from 8 am till midnight.

Given the increase in number of e-mails to AA Denmark, we have established an Internet answering service based on our experiences from the telephone service. This e-mail helpline is a success. Everyone gets an answer within 24 hours. The number of e-mails is growing. More and more schools and educational institutions request information about Alcoholics Anonymous. They almost always ask for a visit from AA both for talks and general information about our organization. Our website includes a Power Point presentation, especially designed for schools.

### **Internet**

AA Denmark has established a website, [www.anonyme-alkoholikere.dk](http://www.anonyme-alkoholikere.dk), which is still being improved. It is possible to order literature on the website. 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 redesign our website. The committee is also the safeguard for traditions, especially overseeing that the anonymity is not 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 decided to follow the recommendations of WSM not to use the social media.

### **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 experiences. 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, moreover, as of 2002, we have also been participating in the World Service Meetings. At the moment we only have one international delegate, who covers a period of four years. We hope that a new member will be elected for the General Service Conference in 2018.

# FINLAND

## Introduction

A.A. has been in Finland since 1948. In 2018 it will be 70 years AA in Finland. Today we have some 660 groups in 260 different locations. The total number 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 trusted servants and delegates to the A.A. Fellowship. Between 900 and 1,500 visitors gather each year at these Meetings. This year the Meeting was held in the town of Espoo, April 25 - 26, 2017. Next Meeting will be held in Helsinki, April 14 – 15, 2018. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, 2018 will be the 70 anniversary of A.A. in Finland.

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 topics to the agenda and the Meeting handles all proposed topics.

## Structure, Activities and Finance

The heart of A.A. is the groups, which form 17 areas. The groups organize 2-4 open national conventions yearly. The members also arrange several smaller local/areal events in different regions. The groups do active Twelfth Step work and cooperate closely with AI-Anon.

The General Service Office at Vantaa employs two permanent workers. Along with administration and communications, the office takes care for updating of the Fellowship's Internet pages [www.aa.fi](http://www.aa.fi) that have undergone a remarkable renovation over the past few years. Several areas have their own internet pages, too.

The A.A. helpline, supported by the A.A. groups, covers the whole country and receives thousands of calls yearly. We also have a monthly A.A. Radio Program – a direct one hour broadcast. All programs - past and present - are also available through our Internet pages.

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

## Finnish A.A. Service

The Finnish A.A. Service consists of the delegates (20) who are elected by the areas at the area meetings to serve for a period of two years as a deputy member and two years as a full member. The Finnish A.A. Service chooses from among the delegates the chair and the secretary for the Service, as well as the members of the committees. The committees include: Policy and Admissions; Literature; International Affairs; Information and Carrying the Message. We have also three independent committees: Prison, Youth (est. 2015) and Travel Planning. Finnish A.A. Service, as well as the committees, has 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, and publishing activities, such as copyrights and printing of A.A. literature

We publish two bulletins: “Ratkaisu” and “Tiedotuksia”. “Ratkaisu” is published 10 times a year with a distribution of 2,000 copies and it has articles and stories about alcoholism, written by both alcoholics and others. Among the others, the President of the Republic of Finland and the Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland have kindly given their input in the bulletin.

“Tiedotuksia” comes out every month in an edition of 2,200 copies. This bulletin is 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 the WSM and E.S.M. They cooperate closely with Scandinavian countries, especially with Sweden; communication with other countries occurs on a case-by-case basis. Both WSM delegates report to Annual General Meeting, in other words to the groups, and their travel and other reports and overviews are published in our bulletins.

# FRANCE

## General Service Office (GSO)

Located at 29, rue Campo Formio, 75013 Paris, France.  
This year for the first time GSO has 2 full time employees.

## General Structure

Counting 573 groups in France and overseas regions (Polynesia, Reunion Islands, the West Indies, Guyana and New Caledonia), we observe a slow and continuous decrease in the number of groups. There are still empty geographical areas.

Group details: 6 in prisons, 24 in hospitals, 507 French-speaking, 54 English, 5 Polish, 1 Spanish, 1 Russian-speaking and one group in French sign language.

France is divided into 5 geographical territories mainly for the use of interregional activities, especially the Service Forum and the National Annual Convention.

This year three of the five Territories have organized a Service Forum.

## General Service Board (GSB)

The G.S.B is composed of 11 members. 3 Class A (non-alcoholic) Trustees including the chairman of Union des Alcooliques Anonymes (UAA), and 8 Class B (alcoholic) Trustees, including 3 attached to General Service and 5 to Territorial Service. The G.S.B meets 4 times a year.

The extended G.S.B has 7 standing committees.

## Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is composed of 6 members, including the National Treasurer.

France has achieved a balanced budget since 2015

After the Annual Convention registered a deficit for last year, the committee is working on how to reduce the risks for future Conventions.

The contribution of sobriety dollars is stable compared to the previous year. Measures have been taken to reserve the sobriety dollars account to the strict actions of the fifth tradition.

The sale of literature contributes 30% of the global budget of AA France.

The total payment amount for the two International solidarity ESM and WSM funds was \$1,000.

The 3 French speaking General Service Conferences (GSO) 2017 decided to separate the financing of participation for the WSM equally between their countries, France, Switzerland, and Belgium.

A disbursement of 500 € for the international Literature Fund was paid out of the sobriety dollars account.

The prudent reserve is 1.35 year of operations of last year

## **General Structure and Policy**

Our service structure is based on the AA service manual of the E-U / Canada General Service Conference (GSC). We have added an addendum specific to France. Updates for the 2016-2017 edition have been added and proposals for updating for the 2017-2018 edition have been validated by the GSC.

The year 2016/2017 focused on a new territorial organization of France becoming 13 regions instead of 22.

The question is: should the structure of Alcoholics Anonymous be based on the French territorial reform? (Law of August 7<sup>th</sup> 2015)

At the GSC in 2016, the following resolution was adopted: "The Conference recommends to the General Service Board that the GSP Trustee should form a temporary committee to work on the adaptation of our organization following the new regionalization".

The committee met twice during the year to develop a questionnaire in order to improve the understanding of the groups, both in actions and in expectations. This questionnaire is an indispensable step before considering any form of modification in our internal Service structure. Following the resolution and vote of the GSC in 2017, the questionnaire will be distributed with its explanatory letter directly to the groups and these documents will be published on the AA France website. A response is requested by the end of October 2017 in order to continue the work and to provide answers for 2018.

## **National Committee for Publications and Archives (CNPA)**

The committee is composed of 6 members, including the referring Trustee.

The missions of the committee is to promote our literature, encourage its reading, as well as the guides and leaflets; to come up with or update brochures and to archive printed and digital documents.

The organizing of the printed archive is completed, the scanning of the audio recordings continues. France has a joint project with Belgium and Switzerland to create a perpetual calendar containing extracts and highlights from the history of Alcoholics Anonymous' literature, in order to motivate members to read more. The 3 countries have entrusted France to examine the project and its realization. France offers as new publications this year the translated AAWS brochure « Your District Committee Member. »A « Call Before » medallion and a special edition of our magazine Partage (Share) « Partage 40 years » is also included in the catalogue.

## **Institution pole - National Health Committee (NHC)**

The National Health Committee to the Professional community is composed of 5 members from the different Territories.

Since the 2016 Conference, the implementation of referents for 5th tradition actions has made a better follow-up possible, and has facilitated our collaboration with the healthcare staff of the care units despite the new healthcare policy.

In several regions, communication between groups has improved through the scheduling of specific community actions. We insist on the indispensable role of GSRs as the favoured communication tool.

The Centres of Care, Accompaniment and Prevention in Addiction (Les Centres de Soins, d'Accompagnement et de Prévention en Addiction- CSAPA) and the Communal Centres of Social Action (Centres Communaux d'Action Sociales - CCAS) are very solicitous of our participation.

More and more information is being provided to nursing schools as well as to certain University programs. The "compass theory" has made it possible to pool together actions of the 5th tradition making them easier.

At the last Conference, delegates proposed that we convey our message more to businesses, by contacting companies' health officials, Human Resources managers, Health, Safety and Working Conditions Committees (Comités d'Hygiène, de Sécurité et des Conditions de Travail - CHSCT) and trade unions.

On a personal basis, members of Alcoholics Anonymous have been able to attend addictology training courses available by the Actions Addictions Funds in order to become « Patient-Experts. » Although there is no official status in France, the role of these Patient-Experts is increasingly recognized by caregivers in the field of addictions. This training helps to legitimize the patient-expert's competencies by complementing his or hers experience of addiction and self-help groups with knowledge, and to learn to speak the professional language of health care personnel to facilitate communication and collaboration with professionals in institutions.

### **Institution pole - Legal Committee**

The Legal Committee has 5 members, with one of them as referring Trustee.

The purpose of this Committee is to define and offer the best way and tools to help volunteers in the correctional field.

The actions in the correctional environment cover essentially 2 sectors: the closed and open environment

The Ministry of Justice and Prison Administration are increasingly appealing to civil society, including AA, to take an active part in the rehabilitation and alternative to incarceration.

The Legal Committee helps volunteers to open groups, units and information meetings in closed and open environments. The Committee is very vigilant to remind that the interventions in correctional environment are teamwork. Therefore it is important to attend to create strong teams before engaging any action. Single actions are highly discouraged. Regarding the visibility of AA towards the professionals of the correctional environment, we signed an agreement with the Direction of Penitentiary Administration (Direction de l'Administration Pénitentiaire - DAP) and share our information and experience about our actions with them. We are in contact with the various civil associations partners of the DAP and we exchange our experiences with them. We can also pool our forces to improve our conditions of intervention. The DAP in collaboration with AA for 2016/17 produced a video to present the Fellowship to inmates or defendants.

The last census of AA's involvement in the incarcerated population in France shows that we are represented in 40 correctional institutions (1/5 of the penal institutions in France), 45 actions: 6 groups, 28 branches, 11 information meetings, 7 regular actions in open environment.



## **Communication Pole – Helpline and Internet Committee**

The committee is composed of 8 members, including the referring Trustee.

France has a unique telephone number for the helpline, +339 36394020 which allows to reach an alcoholic in recovery 24/7 to find a meeting or be connected to a 12 step volunteer.

All 22 French regions participate in the rotation for the night helpline at a rate of 2 or 3 weeks per year and have a 12th step volunteer contact. If a region cannot provide service members for all 7 nights, a national call for solidarity is made.

11 regions or intergroups participate in rotation for daytime helpline service.

The documents used by the volunteer service member have been updated in order to help the best possible way the still suffering alcoholic, or guide him or her to other fellowships (12 step fellowships or other associations) if necessary.

The rate of night calls is 80%, and 90% for the day calls, mainly still suffering alcoholics reaching out for help, but also families ...

The National website ([www.alcooliques-anonymes.fr](http://www.alcooliques-anonymes.fr)) was launched in July 2016. It offers public access and member access.

The primary purpose of the public space is to inform the general public and to arouse attraction in order to help the still suffering alcoholic. It is addressed to alcoholics, but also to doctors, journalists, media...

There is a presentation with AA testimonials and Frequently Asked Questions in order to help alcoholics identify, as well as a list of local, national and global meetings and online meetings (Online Intergroup AA-OIAA)

The regional pages with current events of actions are available to the regions.

The resources section contains our publications and useful links to deal with other dependencies. This member space is reserved for AA members and concerns general information, literature, the fifth tradition, the life of the group, the service committees, the Journal of General Services (the quarterly AA member publication from UAA), the forthcoming Convention and access to all downloadable documents.

Access to the members' area requires a widely diffused password.

## **Communication Pole - The Public Relations Committee**

The PR Committee is composed of 4 members and ensures the relationship with the general public (communication with journalists, media and online media) or helping groups to communicate with the media.

The committee facilitates the transmission of our message (video, brochures, posters, cards,) using new tools 2.0, as well as keeping the traditional means of communication.

The Committee updates our national Facebook® page and Twitter® account. Its current projects include the finalization of the institutional brochure "Alcoholics Anonymous in France" as well as a new television campaign. An Instagram® account is under development.

The Public Relations Committee is in strong interaction with the Helpline and Internet Committee.

## **National Convention**

Every year, one of the territories organizes the National Convention through a voted-in committee from the territory. This year (18/19 November) the Convention will take place in Toulouse, and in November 2018 it will be in La Baule (Bretagne). GSC voted for the national Convention to be held in the Center-Paris-Ile de France territory every 5 years, the year ending on 0 or 5. The convention will take place in the 4 other territories according to a determined timetable.

## **Working with Other Countries**

French-speaking Belgium, France and French-speaking Switzerland have close and privileged relations. They constitute, moreover, one common entity (French speaking Europe) in relation to the WSM. Since 2009, these three countries have formalized this cooperation through the "French-speaking European crossroad of Exchange"(CEFE) meeting at their three conferences. All three countries manage a joint company together under Belgian law for the edition of publications (copyright granted by AAWS to AA Belgium on behalf of the three countries).

The CEFE is composed of GSB members from the 3 countries who have been invited to the conferences. Its purpose is to prepare joint projects between our three countries. The international delegate is also invited.

A new milestone will be reached in 2019; the CEFE proposes the organization of a European French Speaking Service Forum. An organizing committee will be appointed, consisting of people from the three countries.

After having experienced a period of significant additional costs, sponsorship between countries, (particularly to the countries of French Speaking Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb), has regained a more modest dimension and is better suited to the spiritual notion of sponsorship: France offers a better help to the outstretched hands in these countries by helping forming local groups and sending out endowments of publications.

## **General Information**

Alcoholics Anonymous is based on a uniqueness of purpose as stated in our traditions: the mutual assistance of alcoholics suffering from alcohol. However, we collaborate in every opportunity given in service and experience sharing with other twelve-step Fellowships, whom we invite in our national and sometimes regional conventions.

For the G.S.B, a reflection is underway to develop and / or substitute some of the service meetings using online meetings in order to reduce our travel expenses. These online meetings or videoconferences will be held in respect of our traditions and be strictly reserved to the concerned members.

# GERMAN SPEAKING EUROPE

## Structure Report

I will start by explaining some peculiarities in the way AA works in the German-speaking regions.

To give you an example, I am both the World Service Delegate for German Speaking Europe and the European Service Delegate for Switzerland. The delegates alternate between the three countries, Germany, Austria (including German-speaking South Tyrol in Italy) and Switzerland.

The main peculiarity is that Germany always provides one delegate for World Service who at the same time is a European Service delegate. Austria and Switzerland have one World Service Delegate for both countries. All four years, both countries in turn appoint their delegate. The country without a World Service Delegate has the right to choose their own Europe Service Delegate during those 4 years. In the last 20 years, Switzerland has been waiving the right to have one World Service Delegate.

In our three countries, we have three different legislative systems (4 if we include South Tyrol). In order to accommodate these different systems, we have established our own AA society in each country. Each country also has their own Service Office.

During our common service conference in Rösrath/Germany once a year, and in the common Service committees in Eisenach/Germany (3-4x per year), we address all matters concerning AA affairs in German Speaking Europe.

Topics include: Finance, policy issues, internal communication, internet and new media, literature, public relations.

In these conferences Germany is represented by ten inter- groups and Austria and Switzerland by one inter-group respectively.

While Austria and Switzerland have their own service conference to address national matters, Germany does not organise a national service conference but uses the common conference in Rösrath to discuss national matters. We have been working together in this form over 25 years. At times, our cooperation has its challenges!

The fact that the meeting in Germany is both a platform for national and regional matters often leads to unnecessary discussions and differences. This discussions are very time-intensive, meaning that we have less time to carry out our main task, namely to spread the message.

This is a cause of concern because in the recent years there has been a decline in the numbers of AA groups. However, we see that the English Speaking AA Groups have been steadily growing in numbers at the same time. 50% of the friends in these groups are native speakers of German. The English Speaking AA Groups all over Switzerland are closer to the AA program and live the sponsorship.

## New Forms of Co-operation

Currently we work together in a working group to establish a new form of cooperation. The first common meeting is going to take place on September 22th in Eisenach/ Germany. I will be able to tell you more about the outcome of this meeting during our ESM in York.

## **AA Switzerland**

AA Switzerland has four inter-groups. One of German-speaking Switzerland. One of French and Italian-speaking Switzerland and one of English-speaking meetings in the German part as well as in the French part of Switzerland. In the past, our collaboration was not always as close as desired. In the meantime, we are planning a common AA Switzerland convention in the year 2019.

### **Convention**

In the year 2016 we had a GSAA Convention in Bremen. It was a very pleasant meeting. Unfortunately, this year the GSAA convention in Lübeck had to be cancelled as the convention building was not ready. Instead, the Austrian AA organised an Alpine Convention in Leoben, Styria, Austria. It was a smaller Convention, but we loved it. Friends from all German-speaking countries, including South-Tyrol, attended the meeting.

Switzerland has not been in a position to organise a convention in the past 15 years. This is because the price level in Switzerland is very high and the attendance fee for should not pass 24 Euro.

### **AA Magazine**

In the German part of Europe, we have a common AA magazine, called DACH. This abbreviation means 'roof' in German and is at the same time and abbreviation of all 4 country names: D Germany, A Austria und CH Switzerland. This magazine is the fruit of close cooperation between the three countries in the past 25 years.

For internal communication we have the Magazine AA Intern 422.

Switzerland has also his own AA magazine, called IRGENDWO for SOMEWHERE. This Magazine was established 45 years ago.

### **Working Climate in GDA**

At times, I feel that the work climate during our GDA is not particularly positive. It lacks mutual trust. Service needs trust. So I hope the climate will be better as a result of new forms of cooperation.

Thank God and you for enabling me to do this service and thank you for being able to share this with you.

# GREAT BRITAIN

## Groups, Intergroups (I/Gs) and Regional Assemblies

At the end of June 2017 there were a total of 5103 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 4435 AA Groups.

The figures indicate that AAGB is still growing increasing by approximately 0.9% 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 122 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, Armed Services and Young People. These liaison activities are reported upon below.

## General Service Conference

The Fifty -Second General Service Conference was held in April this year, the theme being 'A New Freedom & A New Happiness.' The Conference comprised of 94 delegates from the 16 Regions, 20 members of the General Service Board, Amanda S Conference Chair (London Region South), General Secretary, 6 General Service Office staff.

Also in attendance were 7 Observers from Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland, Portugal and Bulgaria.

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 2 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 Board Chair and Honorary Treasurer attended the World Service Meeting in New York. We have made financial contributions to the International Literature Fund and also made a donation to enable delegates from Belarus, Czech Republic and Romania attend the World Service Meeting.

Sponsorship of the Sub-Sahara African Service Meetings in South Africa continues, shared equally with USA/Canada. The Board Chair and Board Trustee Denise attended the South Africa meeting in June 2017. Sponsorship of the Polish Conference continues and Trustees Brian and Amanda will attend the Polish Conference in November. 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.

We have financed a video project – five new service videos for: Health, PI, Armed Services, Employment and Prisons have been produced, they will be presented to Conference in April 2018.

## **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. Share 2018 diaries and calendars have been printed and are available from GSO.

## **Archives**

We are looking at a project with The Borthwick Institute in York to digitally archive the vast amount of material currently held at GSO.

## **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**

A new Chat Now service to enable the suffering alcoholic to get an immediate response and be directed to the phone service or a meeting went live in October last year and is proving a success. As of April 2017 there had been more than 4,000 visits. There is a weekly rota of responders and is manned for around 12 to 14 hours a day. Routinely they are monitoring shifts from: 0600 to 11.30, 16.30 to 19.00, 19.00 to midnight.

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](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

## **Employment**

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

## **Health**

In addition to forming links with local health-related facilities and holding AA meetings in various 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 sub committee has produced some new information this year as a result of the outcome of the General Service Conference 2016. These are: Guide: Welcoming a Newcomer to the Group, pamphlet: 'Violence and Personal Conduct', pamphlet: 'Prison and Alcohol,' pamphlet: 'The God Word,' booklet: 'LGBT' Voices.

All literature is available to order through the online shop on the website.

## **National Conventions**

We have four National Conventions in GB consisting of the Northern, Southern, Scottish and Welsh Convention. Each convention has a Sponsoring Body made up of the surrounding Regions. Each Region has the responsibility of electing an equal number of members who together form the committee which is directly responsible to the Regions through an agreed Terms of Reference.

## **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 this year within the sub-committee has been on working with the national media. We had articles published in the Sunday Mirror newspaper and worked with BBC, ITV This Morning and Good Morning Britain. We also held a PI seminar and had PI officers from across GB attending and sharing their experiences. PI officers in London North & South have launched a poster campaign on the London Underground.

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 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.



## **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention**

A working party as directed by Conference 2016 has been set up to look at the feasibility of organising a GB wide celebration in 2022 to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AA GB.

## **Young People**

Since Conference 2015 the role of the Young People's Liaison Officer has been formally incorporated into the service structure and at Conference 2016 agreed Chapter 12 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain. In the last year we have seen the formation of a YP Subcommittee, comprised of 4 members and a Board Trustee. A YP Liaison meeting was held in York in March this year and was well attended, as a new position there is enthusiasm. A YP Seminar for all IG and Regional YPLOs will be held in York in March 2018.

# GREECE

## The Background

The first groups in Greece started in the middle of 70's. They were taking place in the American bases, especially for the American soldiers. They were also open to all English-speaking alcoholics of the overall population. The Greek-speaking groups started in 1981 in Athens, which in time spread all around the country.

## Bibliography

The books (recovery guides) of the AA which are handed out in Greek are:

- "Alcoholics Anonymous", 3rd Greek edition 2010 (with four Greek stories)  
ISBN 978- 0-916856-98-4
- "12+12", 1st Greek edition 2000, ISBN 1-893007-02-2
- "Living Sober", 1st Greek edition 2002 ISBN 978-1-893007-29-1
- "As Bill sees it", 1st edition 2011, ISBN 978-0-916856-81-6
- "Dr. Bob and the Oldtimers", 1st edition 2016, ISBN 0-916856-07-0

At the time being, the following books are being prepared for publishing:

- "Daily Reflections"

A Translation Group, which is working out new titles for translation, has been created. In the past, the books used to be published in the USA. Today, they are printed in Greece with the treasury money of the Greek GSO. The books are disposed to the groups and members at the printing cost price.

## Leaflets

In Greece the following leaflets are available:

- "My chance to live"
- "A newcomer is asking"
- "Is AA for you?"
- "Alcoholics Anonymous in your region"
- "Understanding Anonymity"
- "44 Questions"
- "Inside AA"
- "Public Information Guide"
- "What is AA? What does AA do?"

Each group locally can publish its own leaflets. For example, Athens group has printed 2 leaflets under the titles "who we are" and "members stories". Bibliography service includes translation, printing, storing, stock-taking and distribution of the books and pamphlets/leaflets. This service is supported by the treasurer and two assistant servants in co-operation with the translation group.

Every year books (recovery guides) and pamphlets are printed and distributed to the groups, the Pan-Hellenic Committee of Public Information and to those interested, as well. Big Book has reached its 3rd Edition as an indication, from January to May 2017, 432 recovery guides were disposed to groups, while at the time being (June 2017) there are still 844 guides on the shelves of our library.

## Finances

A.A are self-supporting, declining outside contributions. Every group has its own treasury, supported by the contributions of the members who want and can afford a small sum of money. Every group spends its money on activities supporting its primary purpose of the A.A, as well as on the running needs of each group, which decides separately on its contribution to the treasury of the Greek G.S.O. Regularly, the Greek G.S.O. Contributes to the treasury of the New York, USA G.S.O, with a certain amount of money.

The money of the Greek G.S.O. is spent on the translation and publishing of books and pamphlets, on the support of groups when they reasonably ask for financial help, on the holding of convention and the running expenses of the office. The money is handled by the elected treasurer with his/her assistant in co-operation with an accountant, who is an outside collaborator. The treasury money is deposited to A.A's bank account. The treasurer is authorized to make all the transactions using the bank account. The accountant takes care of all the necessary actions so that A.A are legal towards the Greek State and he is paid with the treasury money. The Greek G.S.O. has suggested the realization of a "business meeting" with the treasurers, for the carrying of the experience of this service.

## A.A Groups in Greece

Nowadays in Greece 18 Greek - speaking and 14 English - speaking groups are running. In Attica there are 5 Greek speaking groups (Athens, Ilion, Brahami, Phaliro, Chalandri) and 3 English speaking (Parthenon Group, North corner Group, South Corner Group.). The rest of the groups are on the periphery (Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki "Kastron Ano Polis", Grevena, Kastoria, Corfu, Lemnos, Hydra, Mytilene, Mykonos, Paros, Patra, Preveza, Rhodes). There's also an Internet Group (Ionian Group) which is carried out through Skype. Members from all around Greece and overseas Greek people can take part in this group, as well.

There are also several loners, Greek and English-speaking in various regions of Greece, like: Giannena, Zakynthos, Kefallonia, Kalamata, Sparti, Levadia, Lamia, Serres, Komotini, Rethymno, Chania, Heraclion, etc.. The groups communicate with each other and exchange experience through Intergroup, In Athens three English-speaking groups are held, while during summer months English-speaking meetings are held in Chania, Corfu, Hydra, Preveza, Patmos, Rhodes and Zakynthos (Zante).

## General AA Structure

AA groups in Greece take part in the Greek Intergroup with representatives that they vote themselves. Intergroup consists of five members of the Greek GSO (General Service Office) and of the group representatives. It is open to all AA members. Intergroup holds meetings six times a year, every two months. According to the Greek legislation, since we print and distribute books and pamphlets, our fellowship should have a legal basis with a head and a Taxpayer's Identification Number. For this reason, 15 years ago, the least possible legal society was created in the form of a non-profiterring organization under the name "Association for the Co-ordination of the AA Group Activities. For this purpose, a lawyer was assigned to draw up the relevant articles, which are deposited in the qualified institutional organ (Court of the First Instance). According to the articles, the goals of the society are:

- I. "The accomplishment of sobriety through abstinence from alcohol based on Traditions and Steps, in the way they are expressed by the universal fellowship of the Alcoholics Anonymous(AA), as well as the bibliography, which comprises the copyright of the Alcoholics Anonymous(AA).

2. The co-ordination of the work of AA Groups in Greece, so as to achieve the biggest possible carrying of their message.
3. The presentation of the work of the AA to special scientists of mental health, correctional institutions, as well as to social Groups.
4. The promotion of the AA work to the mass media in agreement with the Steps and Traditions of the AA.

The society will seek to become a member of the international Confederation of similar associations of European or international unions which it will co-operate with and to which it will announce its activities."

Every year elections based on the Articles are held and the five-member "Board of Trustees", which consists of the chairman, the vice - chairman, the treasurer, the secretary and the representative in the International General Service Office, is elected. In the language of our fellowship, the Board of Trustees is a committee of Trusty Servants (Greek General Service Office), which consists of the co-ordinator, assistant to the co-ordinator, secretary, treasurer and representative. The elected members as well as the representatives are willing members to assume service, who fulfill certain conditions, such as their sobriety time and experience in service. These conditions are defined by the conscience of the Greek General Service Office.

The five-member committee holds separate meetings (business meetings) six times a year, every two months, for the purpose of preparing the Intergroup topics as well as for the operational and administrative central issues. These meetings are open to all members of A.A. Both in the General Service Office and Intergroup, members from all around the country can take part through Skype. Totally, six meetings of the Greek G.S.O and six Intergroup meetings a year take turns, while open business meetings of secretaries and treasurers are being programmed within the bounds of service of the Greek G.S.O, service committees formed for a short period of time, are brought into action.

These committees are the following:

- 1) Pan-Hellenic Committee of Public Information: The aims of the committee are the sharing of experience in Public Information issues, the activities of Public Information, the support and carriage of experience to groups who carry out their own activities of Public Information, in case they ask for it, the communication with authorities who ask information about A.A., etc. The committee holds meetings open to all A.A. members twice a month. Representatives of groups from all over the country take part in this committee either physically or through Skype.
- 2) Pan-Hellenic Convention Committee. Each year a new Convention committee, which consists of members from one specific group of members from various groups, is elected. The aim of the committee is the organization and holding of the annual Hellenic (Greek) Convention, which takes place each October.
- 3) Bibliography group: It consists of the treasurer, the assistant to the treasurer and willing members who are called for support. The aim of the committee is organizing the library, the book distribution and the financial support of bibliography and printing.
- 4) Translation Group: It's formed by members willing to translate new book titles and pamphlets, as well as the elaboration of texts to be republished.

The money of the committees is money of the Central treasury. Every committee is an autonomous group which functions on the basis of the 12 traditions and refers to the Intergroup.

The means of communication (telephone and mail) are handled by members of the Pan-Hellenic Committee of Public Information.

G.S.O co-operates with the Committee holding the International Convention, which takes part in Greece in May every year.

### **Other Services**

Regularly and repeatedly both P.C.P.I and groups in Athens and the periphery hold local activities for the service of our primary purpose. These activities are:

- Presentation of the A.A programme to radio and TV programmes.
- Presentation of the programme to institutions , such as hospitals, prisons, police schools, etc.
- Insertion of information spots and publications in press, radio and internet.
- Carrying of the message to alcoholics who are treated in hospitals or are imprisoned.
- Informing the relevant authorities associated with the issue of alcoholism, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, institutions of mental health and hospitals, church, government agencies as police, correctional institutions and mass media with forwarding letters with informative bulletin.
- Dispatching our books to libraries of institutions and schools.
- Sticking up bills in central public sports of cities.
- Forwarding invitations to government agencies for their participation in the Greek Convention and in our open meetings.

### **Relationships with Other Countries**

AA in Greece wish to promote the development of communication and relations with the AA all over the world, so as to enrich our experience continually and bolster up our primary purpose. The annual International Convention which is held in May each year, makes up an ideal opportunity for countries from all over the world to meet and experience to be exchanged. Our country keeps in continuous contact with the GSO of the USA, not only for bibliography items but for the carrying of experience and support that the Greek groups demand for various issues, as well.

Since in our country a lot of Alcoholics from Balkan countries live, bridges of connection have been created between our countries and mainly with Bulgaria and Rumania. Recently, Bulgaria has asked for experience in order to organize its own Intergroup and we keep in touch continuously.

Also, we've recently been asked for relevant help by our neighbour Turkey, for the creation of its own Intergroup.

On the occasion of the present European Service Meeting and because of the geographical spot of our country, the idea of organizing the first Balkanic Convention in the city of Thessaloniki, which is very close to the capitals of our neighbouring countries was born. We carry this idea to our fellows in the countries of the Balkanic peninsula and we ask for your experience for the organization of this convention.

### **Internet and Websites**

For almost 15 years we have registered website page under the address [www.aa-greece.gr](http://www.aa-greece.gr). Our page includes all the relevant informations about us, like: "who the A.A are", "what the A.A do ", "what the A.A don't do", our bibliography, our meeting lists, announcements about conventions and events, related links, etc. In this page there's also the link in English.

So far, the page was informed and supported by trusted servants with relevant knowledge. Recently, the updating of the page was decided to be done by a professional - outside collaborator. There are also pages that contain entries about the A.A in Greece and our activities.

The committees of the Central Office inform the groups and members, after each meeting of the Greek G.S.O. and its committees, through e-mail.

In 2009, with the exploitation of the potentialities of technology, online speaking AA meeting was made up in Greece, which carries out meetings four times a week. This new experience contributed in the creation of the corresponding German online meeting and it was spread as an application and use all over Greece for the realization of business with the participation of members from remote areas.

# ICELAND

## Structure

Every week more than 300 A.A. meetings are held in Iceland, a country with a population of only three hundred thousand. All alcoholics are welcome at any A.A. meeting, whatever language they may speak.

There are also four English-speaking meetings held in Reykjavik. We also have two weekly Russian- and Polish- and one German-speaking meetings in Reykjavik.

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

A.A. volunteers take meetings to hospitals, treatment facilities and prisons.

## Internet

Some A.A. members use the Internet to communicate, but it is a matter of individual and personal choice and is not done through an A.A. website. Some members use Skype or Internet options, such as Facebook, to connect. We have updated our website with new graphic and with more information [www.aa.is](http://www.aa.is)

## Intergroups

We have been encouraging A.A. 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 A.A.

## General Service Board

The National Service Board (NSB) is made up of twelve trustees of whom nine are A.A. members and three are non alcoholic trustees. The NSB has monthly meetings in the winter time. The board runs the National Service Office for A.A. in Iceland, and organizes the Annual National Service Meeting. Furthermore, the board is responsible for an Open Celebration Meeting on Good Friday every year to commemorate the arrival of A.A. in Iceland on that day in 1954. Some 3,000 people participate in that meeting. For the past few years the meeting has been translated into sign language.

In World Service Meeting 2016 we bid to host the next WSM 2018 and we are backup for South Africa.

## General Service Office

The National Service Office located in Reykjavik, at Tjarnargata 20, has a part- time staff of one, an A.A. member who started work in the office 2014 and since then the committee and the staff have been reorganizing our work methods.

The office is open all weekdays from 11 am to 3 pm and takes care of all regular and routine work for A.A. in Iceland, similar to other GSO's.

## Finances

Contributions from A.A. groups usually cover 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.

### **Literature**

Several items of A.A. Conference-approved literature, books and brochures have been published in Icelandic and we also have the Big Book and Twelve and Twelve on CD. Then we also have *Dr. Bob and the good old timers*, *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. We have been working on revising the Icelandic version of the Big Book which we hope will be ready soon. The process have taken little longer time. This year we are finishing the work on the pamphlet *Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix*.

We also have a pocket-size edition of the Big Book.

We are seeing increase in sale of the Big Book in other languages, specially in Polish. We import them and sell them direct from our office to A.A. groups, hospitals, treatment facilities and prisons.

Our general service office also offer to order books and pamphlets in any language if requested for members.

### **Conference & Conventions**

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

### **Contact Information and Websites,**

The National A.A. office in Iceland is at Tjarnagata 20, Reykjavik, open on working days between 11am and 3pm. Tel +354 551 2010, our e-mail: [aa@aa.is](mailto:aa@aa.is) and website [www.aa.is](http://www.aa.is)



## IRELAND

AA in Ireland now in its 71st year has grown from humble beginnings to now having in the region of 900 groups. Our estimated membership of approximately 15,000, ensure that over 100,000 meetings are held annually.

Our structure of group, area, inter group and conference is functioning efficiently. Our board takes responsibility for national PI, with the assistance of a sub committee elected by conference.

Over the past two-three years there has been a concerning drop in contributions to GSO. Our most recent conference decided to implement measures, that will reduce expenses, and together with an appeal to our members to increase contributions, we are confident that our financial situation will improve considerably.

All our services i.e. phone, PI etc are functioning well. Our DVD "The Road Back" with subtitles in English and Irish sign language is widely being used by our public information committees.

At our 2017 conference we were given a presentation of a new DVD, which it is hoped will be used by the medical profession, to help the public in becoming more aware of Our Fellowship. It is our hope it will be shown in hospitals, doctor surgeries etc.

Realizing the importance of social media, we have released an App called "The AA Finder", which is of great benefit to members in finding the location and times of meetings throughout the country. This information is accompanied by relevant Google Maps. Our AA bi-monthly magazine "The Road Back" has undergone a revamp over the past two years and the feedback from our membership is very encouraging.

One aspect of concern to The Fellowship, is the difficulty in getting more members involved in our service structure. We are addressing this problem by holding service workshops throughout the country.

In conclusion, The Fellowship in Ireland is continuing to grow, and we are taking the relevant steps to continue carrying our message of recovery to the still suffering alcoholic.

## ITALY

Hello everybody, my name is Rita and I am an alcoholic. I am here representing AA Italy as their second term delegate.

Alcoholics Anonymous in Italy was established in 1972, for these past 15 years it has a stable number of groups estimated as a total of 460.

The Areas are represented by our geographical regions, therefore we have 19 Areas.

Our General Service Board consists of 11 (eleven) Trustees: 4 (four) are Territorial Trustees; 5 (five) have a Committee (Agenda, Public Information, Literature and "Insieme in AA", Finance and Budgetary, International); 1 (one) is our National Secretary and our "Class A" Trustee.

This year, AA Italy was proud to share the moment of the Conference with two guests, Jasna from Slovenia and Yury from Ukraine. The atmosphere was a mix of excitement and will to share our experience with them both. This was the first time we hosted guests, but it will surely become a habit for AA in Italy because it is worth it. All our delegates were enthused with their presence.

### **THE ONLY QUESTION FOR ALL THE COMMITTEES WAS THE FOLLOWING:**

The synthesis of the work done according to the indications of the Conference in 2016 referred to the only question has shown a few aspects of our Association for which it seems necessary a different and deeper pledge on all sides.

What does the Conference suggest should be done to overcome the lack of spirit of fellowship, of mutuality and a vision of togetherness as an answer to the problems of our Association?

How can we overcome the general difficulty to commit ourselves to grow together and positively in the spirit of Unity? How is Service a part of our Recovery?

### **ANSWER:**

We believe that the corner-stone for a shared and concrete growth in the spirit of Unity is to be searched in the Groups through the effective and concrete application of our Program (Steps, Traditions and Concepts), to be developed in a methodical way, having seen that in the Groups where this is done, we find more people in Service. The deepening of our method done in a common and constant way helps grow the feeling of belonging and with that, the spirit of fellowship, mutuality, and a clear vision of togetherness.

A suggestion to the Territorial Trustees from the Conference, with the help of Delegates of all Areas, is to visit those realities which don't have a service structure and verify together the problems and search together the best solution.

Therefore, how is it possible to change the Principles in Action? With the experience of certain Areas we believe that workshops, just like seminars, could be the best moment to create a new well informed and willing conscience, for example to write the wording of the questions for the Conference and also to collaborate for the co-ordination of Zones.

Create moments of sharing starting from what is functioning well to get to those who do not function well.

To stimulate the participation and the constant frequency at the structures of AA, starting from the Zones, with which for their nature favour the Unity of the Association.

Service, sponsored with joy and enthusiasm, is an instrument of strong attraction.

It remains indispensable, in all the aspects of our three legacies, to guide with the example. This year our Conference closed the four year marathon in which we tried to analyze our Step Four of the Association. The aim and purpose of this analysis was to understand the difficulties which our Southern regions have to open groups and save lives, seek reasons for the scarcity of people in service with new people, communicate with the groups with the help of Areas and Zones through delegates and co-ordinators.

AA Italy, through its' Agenda Committee and Council, thought that it would be the best way to see clearly what was necessary on behalf of people in service and groups.

The Areas in Southern Italy with the help of our Trustee and delegates are beginning to see new groups starting off and the Macro-Regional seminars have important guests as speakers. This does help the people who seek us and give them a possibility to recover but much more must be done still.

Not much has improved with the will to participate in service, we are optimistic though! This year there were young delegates at our Conference and well prepared with detailed questions for the Council and precise with the answers.

Our Conference next year will have the following theme: **“Refinding our Identity.”** It will take place on **April 12–15, 2018.**

Our economical situation is stable, we are receiving contributions from the groups which also helps us understand that the groups put their trust in the General Service Board and their will to serve.

The Literature Committee has changed certain points of the “12 Concepts for World Service” as we don't have any holding corporation and therefore these corrections of certain Concepts are closer to our reality. We did get the permission from the World Services, now they are less complicated for Italians.

ITALYPAA held their second Convention in March which seemed to be a success. The General Service Board is trying to co-operate in order to find unity, even though not all the trustees fully agree with the name “ITALYPAA” because Alcoholics Anonymous should have one only name.

Our toll free number does receive requests for help, our website is continuously being updated in order to have all the information possible for all who search for help.

The will for a constant growth and give the groups all the assistance necessary in order to Carry the Message is the main purpose for the Trustees in the General Service Board.

Thank you for your attention.

# LATVIA

## Structure

The number of AA groups in the last two years has increased to approximately 70 groups. New groups are created once in a while, but unfortunately some of the old groups dissolve, although their total number remains stable. All in all, the geographical availability of meetings keeps increasing and the message of AA is spreading. Most meetings take place in the capital of Latvia, Riga, where meetings are available all days of the week, and at various times. There are Latvian and Russian meetings, as well as one English meeting. There is also a Skype meeting for Latvian expats and travellers abroad.

In six out of 11 prisons in Latvia there are AA meetings available.

The number of participants in each AA group varies – starting from 2-3 people in the newly formed groups (typically in smaller towns) up to more than 40 in bigger groups.

## GSO, GSB and General Service Conference

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 60% 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 and support services. The Conference also helps in spreading the message and educating members of groups regarding the Traditions, Concepts and Principles of AA. Conference elects 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.

At the end of 2016 some active members of Latvian AA formed an unofficial activist group “We want GSO”, in order to establish a properly working Latvian GSO with a paid employee. Until then the work of Latvian GSO was managed by some AA members as part of the service.

GSC of 2017 supported the hiring of a paid GSO manager, therefore starting from March 2017, Latvian GSO is working more actively, tasked with helping groups, communicating GSB information and other news, updating the website, supporting events organized by Latvian GSB.

There are several Committees participating in the service of our General Service Board – Finance, Events, Literary, Committees that cooperate with Professional Community and Society (very actively engaged in cooperating with rehabilitation programs and prisons for carrying the AA message), as well as our monthly magazine ‘Vinoga’ editorial board. The GSO coordinates the rotation of people serving with the help-line phone (24/7) and our website [www.aa.org.lv](http://www.aa.org.lv).

In cooperation with several groups, Summer Camp (one week, usually at the beginning of August) for alcoholics and families and friends, Midsummer’s Night event, New Year’s Eve event, AA annual Anniversary is organized.

## Finances

The group contributions have increased. Especially after the General Service Conference, where the group representatives voted to hire a paid GSB employee. 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. Also groups are donating more for carrying the message to prisons. Our financial situation can be characterized as solid.

Our main expenses are comprised of professional accounting, rent for the main office, help-line phone, translating, editing and publishing AA literature, and salary for GSB employee.

### **Literature**

The Literary Committee has been working very actively. This year the new edition of 'Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions' was published with updated and improved translation.

We are preparing to publish a new edition of "Daily Reflections". The revision and improvement of the previous translation is being done.

Also the first translation of "Dr. Bob and Good Oldtimers" is about to be published this year.

### **Relations 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. In 2017 Latvian AA members visited Polish experience exchange workshop about AA service in prisons. We also cooperate with Lithuanian AA. Every two years we participate in the ESM and our members also take part in the WSC.

Our Fellowship is visited by brothers and sisters from Lithuania, Estonia, Russia, Belorussia, Finland, Poland, Great Britain, 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.

# LITHUANIA

## Literature

AA Lithuania uses the approved literature of A.A. GWS.

We recently printed a Lithuanian translation of the Twelve Concepts for World Service by Bill W.

AA in Lithuania has 8 AA books, 13 brochures and the Service Guide. Books are on sale in major bookstores and online bookstores. The book "Alcoholics Anonymous" can be read online on our website. We also have a released audio CD "Alcoholics Anonymous". AA in Lithuania 4 times a year a magazine "Penktas kampas" ("The Fifth Corner") is published. Once or twice a year - the service leaflet – "Aušra" (Dawn).

A book "30 years of AA in Lithuania" is being prepared for release the next year.

## Finance

In the financial field, the situation has stabilized. Groups preserve the 7th Tradition, sales of the AA books contribute to financial situation too.

In the last year we have been able to increase contributions to A.A. Europe and World General Services and The World Literature Found .

## Groups and Membership

There currently are a total of 137 AA groups in Lithuania. Out of all the Lithuanian groups, 1 speaks English and 7 speaks Russian. There are 5 groups located in prisons and 1 group operates via "Skype".

13 Lithuanian speaking groups run in United States, England, Ireland, Sweden, Norway (and other countries).

## General Structure

AA groups in Lithuania are divided into seven regions.

Our General Service Board consists of seven trustees, one from each of the regions. The chairman of the Board of Trustees, Deputy Chairman, Treasurer and the manager of the AA service Office.

AA in Lithuania hires two employees - the head of the office and the accountant.

Our Conference meets once a year in autumn. The Conference is being prepared by the Conference Preparation Group: Chairman of the Conference, Secretary of the Conference. Five delegates and one trustee from each region, representatives of Lithuanian speaking AA groups from foreign countries, editor of magazine "5th corner", ESM and WSM delegates, Our Board of Trustees and the manager of the AA service office attend this Conference.

The delegates of the Conference are distributed into several committees (Finance, Internal, Public Information and Literature/Publishing). Foreign observers are invited from neighboring countries. In 2008 we started to gather to yearly new-format conferences, which took a very important place in the service structure.

In addition we gather in the Lithuanian A.A. Group meeting for 2 days once a year (in spring). We have been organizing it for two years in a row now. Representatives of all AA groups can share experience with each other.

### **Other Services**

Open AA meetings are held regularly in hospitals, detox-centres, addiction treatment centres, psychiatric wards, and other type of hospitals. There is collaboration with the police, probation and criminal justice services, prisons, the army corps, and other various social services.

### **The International Convention**

We are preparing for an important convention next summer. Next year A.A. Fellowship in Lithuania will be celebrating its 30-th anniversary. It will take place on the 30th of June, 2018, adr.: Palanga, 3 Sporto street, Lithuania. Everyone is welcome to come.

Each year around the same time, during the last week of June, we gather in an international summer camp in a resort town - Šventoji, which is near the Baltic sea. More info at: [www.aalietuvoje.org](http://www.aalietuvoje.org)

### **Relations with Other Countries**

We keep in touch with AA fellowships of USA, Canada, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, UK, Ireland. A.A. Lithuania has close relationships with A.A. Ireland and it has increased a lot after a recent visit of an Irish AA speaker. We invite speakers from other AA countries too.

Some of our members visit international AA conventions and we are always inviting members from other countries to our conventions.

### **Internet & Website, Contact Information**

A.A. Service Office in Lithuania operates at J. Basanavičiaus a. 16, Birštonas, LT-59211, Lithuania. Phone No: +370 319 45141 ; mob. ph. +370 683 67786. E-mail: [info@aalietuvoje.org](mailto:info@aalietuvoje.org)  
Lithuania's AA website: [www.aalietuvoje.org](http://www.aalietuvoje.org) (currently being updated).

### **Today's challenges**

#### **About the situation A.A. in Lithuania.**

Around 2010 "Big book STUDY" groups started to form. They look like followers of the Oxford groups. Seminars of "sponsorship" are being organised. Written contracts are being made between a sponsor and sponsee. Usage of 0th (zero) step. Persistent persuasion that there is "the one and only true path to RECOVERY". They're stating that they don't have alcohol problem anymore, "Aren't ill anymore". Big book study groups aggressively express themselves in public information also discrediting ideas of AA. They publish and sell AA GSO unapproved literature.

Inside of AA fellowship in Lithuania a few individuals are trying to organize a separate structure, which is based on distorted principles of sponsorship. They are attempting to affect AA processes through their sponsees. In this way, chaos is being spread and AA unity is being pulled apart.

Hyperactive actions in public information and ignored opinions of other AA groups and services is making society feel repulsive towards AA fellowship, damaging its public image. Based on the Twelve Concepts for World Service we understand that we can't do much more than just talk trying to appeal to their conscience and urge to follow the 12 traditions of AA. That's why we are asking you to share your experience on how did you deal in similar situations.

# MALTA

## 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 km<sup>2</sup> (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 km<sup>2</sup>, 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 this year, based on statistics obtained over the period 2008 - 2010 the Maltese consume an average of seven liters of pure alcohol a year, which is well below the European average of nearly 11 litres 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 20% 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 practiced 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 the Prison. Unfortunately, this meeting has now been discontinued, albeit on a temporary basis, due to a lack of response from prisoners despite support and encouragement from the local authorities and social workers working in the Malta prison. However, since mid-2016 we now hold a regular weekly meeting at 'Mount Carmel Hospital' – the national hospital specializing in mental care treatment and rehabilitation. We receive excellent support from the nursing staff within the wards who actively encourage those with alcohol issues to attend and although not all psychiatrists involved in the hospital leadership believe strongly in A.A we are receiving very good feedback from most.

### **Challenges**

Like in any organization not all is nice and rosy in our fellowship. Although we have the saying '*small is beautiful*', as we are a small fellowship, (as mentioned in the introduction population in Malta is just over 450 thousand), we at times face some tough challenges. Financial limitations and problems finding members willing to serve other suffering alcoholics come towards the top of the list. Although every group has its own secretary, treasurer and GSC representative, some Maltese speaking groups do not follow the '*rotation*' principle. Some secretaries/treasurers have been serving in the same group for over six years. This is, however, beginning to change.

### **General Service Committee**

The General Service Committee (GSC) meet regularly every six weeks. Unfortunately, attendance both by committee members and GSC group representative has not always been very encouraging. It is true that we experience a language barrier and to an extent a cultural difference between Maltese speaking Groups and English-speaking groups. We are presently trying to find the way forward with a possibility of a new (service) structure for Alcoholic Anonymous in Malta. A single structure for AA Malta intended to serve the needs of all alcoholics in Malta has been suggested, whether Maltese Nationals, Residents in Malta or Visitors. AA Malta hopes to become 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 could best be served by 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 should remain SMALL – perhaps 2 or 3 persons – who should not be involved in day to day issues affecting either language group. It should work in a single language, probably Maltese.

Unfortunately, there has been some resistance to this plan from the English-speaking groups as some members feel that there is an element of “exclusion”, especially since 2016 when the GSC voted that ALL business would be conducted in the Maltese language and all members of the GSC must therefore speak fluent Maltese.

Discussion between the 2 groups are continuing – albeit sporadically and a “meeting of minds” is slowly developing. Hopefully, all differences will be resolved in the (near) future.

### **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, which takes place every five years.

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 – 12<sup>th</sup> International Convention**

As in previous years AA Malta will be holding its annual International Convention. Last year's AA English Speaking International Convention in Malta was a great success with 200 participants from 24 countries. Next year we shall be celebrating – our **12<sup>th</sup> Convention – 52 years of AA in Malta and 82 years of AA Worldwide.**

The theme for this year's convention will be: **“One Day at a Time”** Dates: 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2018. It will be our honour and pleasure should you wish to join us for this great event. Please do visit our web site [www.aamalta.org](http://www.aamalta.org) should you need further information.

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.

# NETHERLANDS

## General

AA was introduced in The Netherlands in 1948. At this moment there are 205 groups with approximately 3.075 members. There are also English-speaking groups (about 40) and the cities of Amsterdam and The Hague have 3 Polish speaking and two Spanish speaking groups. There is good interaction between the various communities.

## Structure

In accordance with our Concepts, AA in The Netherlands is based on delegated authority. We have repeatedly reaffirmed our desire to conduct ourselves according to the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts.

We are divided into six regions. Each region has five delegates eligible for the General Service Conference and one for the General Service Board. Every year a General Service Conference takes place.

The General Service Board meets quarterly to carry out the decisions of the previous General Service Conference, as well as actions requested by AA groups and AA commissions.

The board is composed of selected members from each region, preferably the regional chairpersons, and the national coordinators of various committees and services.

Day-to-day administration of Dutch AA is carried out by the Executive Committee, which consists of preferably five active members of the General Service Board.

The General Service Office is the hub of all services and information within Dutch AA. All administrative workers are volunteers. The general secretary is responsible for daily operations while ultimate responsibility lies with the General Service Board.

The General Service Office is administered according to Dutch civil law and social traditions. As such AA in The Netherlands consists of three foundations: the groups, publicity and the Big Book.

Currently, however, this construction is under investigation through an extra National Advice Committee in order to value the compatibility between legal requirements and AA Traditions and Concepts. 2

## Committees and other services

### Finance

The Finance Committee reviews the proposed budgets of all committees, subcommittees, and services. It further advises the General Service Board on all financial matters.

It is composed of one delegate per region. Income for the active foundations is generated by donations, gifts from living or deceased members, and from the AA groups, as well as the sale of literature.

In 2016 the overall budget was positive. We adhere to the principle of a prudent reserve.

### **Literature**

The Literature Committee is responsible for translating, developing and updating all AA literature in the form of books and pamphlets.

We collaborate with the Belgian AA, because we share the Dutch language which is one of the two official languages of Belgium. The committee is currently working on the Dutch translation of 'Living Sober' and expects it to be ready in at the end of this year.

The Dutch translation of Dr. Bob and the Good Old-timers has been presented in Flanders and is being considered for adoption in The Netherlands. The translation of "The Language of the Heart" is under procedure by both Dutch and Flemish translators.

A new brochure "Where Money and Spirituality Mix" has been edited and is put at disposal free of charge for the Treasurers of each group in the Netherlands.

### **Public Information**

The National Committee for Public Information oversees all requests for assistance and information from organizations outside AA and offers an information package in kit form for the public media. They are very active in their efforts towards the press and other media.

There is a positive atmosphere developing between AA and a growing number of professional help organizations concerned with alcohol abuse. Many of such organizations have based their programs on AA's Twelve Steps, however, negative experiences also occurred because commercial interests of the treatment facilities which sometimes conflict with the AA interests.

Schools and clinics are requesting speakers from AA and the contacts that have been established to reach the suffering alcoholic within correctional facilities are very promising.

The last few years we are happy to be invited by universities, also presenting the AA program which is to their great satisfaction. The National Committee for Public Information has established a closer cooperation with the English-speaking Public Information in the Netherlands.

### **Executive Committee of the General Service Board**

At this moment this committee consists of three members, hopefully later to be increased to five. It has been installed on April 2016, replacing a temporarily Committee, which enabled the legal continuation of Dutch AA.

### **Dutch Telephone Helpline and Internet**

The national telephone number is available on a twenty-four hour basis. At this moment it is short staffed. A number of groups have their own answering service to aid people from their local community.

Our current website has undergone a face-lift. The website conforms to all guidelines published by AA World Services in New York. It includes a complete overview for anyone seeking help with alcohol related problems. It is GSC approved and has been released in 2015. It has also integrated a national web shop.

Relevant information is provided for each A.A. group. A summary of the A.A. program is provided and links to the National Committee for Public Information are available. A.A literature can be ordered via the website. There is an up-to-date agenda for all known upcoming events. Links are provided to Al-Anon, Alateen and English-speaking A.A. in the Netherlands.

***Contacts with other countries***

There is a traditional contact between Dutch and Dutch speaking Belgian AA. This includes active participation on each country's literature committee. English speaking AA flourishes in the Netherlands and holds its own yearly convention. The National Convention is held each year. Both conventions attract a considerable number of visitors from abroad.

# NORWAY

## General

Norway is situated in the northern part of Europe. 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 1.900 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, in Oslo also Icelandic speaking group 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 emerita. 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 20% 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 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.anonymealkoholikere.no](http://www.anonymealkoholikere.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 centres, 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**

### **Structure**

The main purpose 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.

Poland has 2710 groups divided in 86 intergroups in 14 Regions including the European Region, which comprises 170 Polish-speaking groups in 15 countries.

### **General Service Conference**

The General Service Conference is composed of: a) members of the General Service Board which consists of not more than 14 alcoholic trustees, not more than 5 non-alcoholic trustees and 2 national delegates who serve as the European Service Meeting and World Service Meeting delegates representing Poland, b) up to 56 delegates elected by the regional conferences (each Region sends four delegates), c) general manager of the General Service Office, 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 annually in a location chosen by the Conference delegates in the preceding year. The delegates work on four Conference Committees: Agenda, Finance, Literature and Publications, Public Information and Cooperation with Others Outside AA.

### **General Service Board**

The Board of Trustees is currently made up of 14 alcoholics (one from each of the 14 regions), 3 non-alcoholic members and 2 national delegates. Two more non-alcoholic trustees, both being prison psychologists, were nominated last August; they will start on the Board upon confirmation by the 46<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference.

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 trustees’ committees. The trustees and national delegates are also available for other AA services activities as requested by the Board of Trustees.

### **General Service Office**

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

## 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 locally, often to hospitals, correctional and treatment facilities and organizing information meetings for professional communities.

Intergroups' treasurers and liaison officers for prisons, public information, telephone and electronic communication and agenda attend monthly regional subcommittee meetings. Also GSRs and chairs of the intergroups attend regional assemblies to get information from the region, GSB and GSO and give feedback to intergroups and groups.

The regions run contact offices, telephone and online service; they also provide public information.

For over 30 years we have been carrying the AA message into correctional facilities. Currently 225 AA groups are present in 163 jails and prisons. Every year intergroup and regional services organize workshops for prison officers. This year saw the 11th national workshop attended by about 300 participants including 65 prison officers and nearly 30 AAs from Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Ireland, Latvia, Moldova, Norway, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine. Full board accommodation was provided for two delegates from each country. The first ever workshop for teen inmates will take place this October.

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

Every year we organize national service workshops for AAs representing all levels of AA structure – AA groups, intergroups and regions, separately for various disciplines: literature and bulletins, telephone and internet, correctional facilities and public information. These events are attended by GSB trustees, the GSO general manager and staff and very often by AA members 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. We hosted last September professionals from different walks of life and backgrounds: prison and probation officers, law enforcement officers, welfare personnel, representatives of organized labour, educators and teachers, psychologists and others. In attendance was a special guest, a non-trustee from AAGB.

Significant efforts are put into Public Information area. We keep regular contacts with the Polish Parliament, release TV spots and publish articles in newspapers, organize meetings with clergy, media, correctional facilities and treatment officials on the national and provincial level. Trustees' Public Information subcommittee has been entrusted with the task to increase public understanding of AA throughout the country.

In an effort to improve our efficiency in carrying the message and in order to gain more experience from past 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 questions and topics through GSRs, delegates and trustees. Submissions are reviewed, selected and passed on to four Conference Committees for consideration. 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.

In accordance with GSC 2015 recommendation we have started this year an AA Poland membership survey to get the best data about our members, their gender, age, length of sobriety, frequency of attending AA meetings, how they came to AA, what helps them most in recovery.

### **Relations with Other Countries Including Country to Country Sponsorship**

We maintain contacts with the Fellowship in other countries and with the financial support of AA Great Britain we invite other countries to our General Service Conference. Our goal is to encourage those countries to participate in ESM and WSM. Our financial contribution to the ESM fund helps delegates to attend from countries who could not normally afford to take part.

We also get invited to attend Conferences in other countries like Great Britain, Belarus, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova, Slovakia and Ukraine. Etc

Other forms of country-to country sponsorship carrying the AA message worldwide have been applied for years to help jumpstart and develop AA in other Eastern European countries, including but not limited to organizing workshops on Steps, Traditions, Concepts and Spirituality as well as seminars on Conference Charter and Service Manuals.

### **Finance**

The Fellowship of AA in Poland is self-supporting with 39 % of the costs of the GSO activities in Poland coming from members and the remaining 61% covered from literature sales.

Although the sale of some items (*Big Book, We Came to Believe, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*) has recently increased considerably this ratio still seems to be unsatisfactory and many efforts are aimed at changing the groups' awareness in this matter. Workshops on self-support are held regularly at various levels of AA structure to increase awareness and the first ever national workshop for all AA treasurers was held last September.

Two newly published pamphlets "Self- Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix" and "Your Seventh Tradition Contribution. Carrying Our Message Beyond Your Home Group" will help to raise awareness of self-support.

### **Literature**

Our GSO 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 Tradition, 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, Twelve Concepts for World Service and Alcoholics Anonymous, Facsimile Edition.*

Thirty seven pamphlets have also been published including new items to newcomers representing new communities and walks of life. Polish soldiers and military officers who had been in the past deployed to combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, and those who may face such deployments in the future, got to read a Polish translation of "AA and the Armed Services". Alcoholics from LGTB community in Poland were offered the Polish version of "LGBTB voices".

“Many Paths to Spirituality” provided atheists and agnostics an invitation to join and stay in AA. Newcomers of all ages have been greeted with a new pamphlet “Welcoming a Newcomer to the Group”.

Some more items are being translated and/or assessed by AAWS independent translation evaluation service. These include a pamphlet “AA for the Older Alcoholic—Never Too Late” which will help adults who reached retirement age and changed workoholism into alcoholism, and two videos for young AAs – “Young People” and “Carrying the Message Behind these Walls”.

A new edition of AA Service Manual combined with “Twelve Concepts for World Service” by Bill W. and “AA’s Legacy of Service” by Bill W. appeared in the market last February. At the same time an updated booklet “AA Fact File”, containing basic informational material about AA was made available to the professional community.

Volume 2 of *The History of AA in Poland* covering the period 1997 – 2017 has just been completed by one of our AA members and will be ready for publication on the approval by General Service Conference to take place this November.

Our bulletin “Zdrój” with a circulation of about 3,800 copies and a service bulletin “Skrytka 2/4/3” with a circulation of 1,600 copies are published bi-monthly. A special bulletin for professionals “Wieści z AA” is distributed every quarter via e-mail. For a few years we have had a full translation of the reports from the ESM and the WSM.

Each year the AA Fellowship in Poland contributes a sum of \$1,000 to the International Literature Fund.

### **Internet and Helpline**

Our GSO maintains an official AA website at the domain [www.aa.org.pl](http://www.aa.org.pl) which receives about 45,000 visits per month. We also maintain online 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”.

Regional information services have been set up containing meetings lists and other information with other tools available such as Trustees’ Forum and Chat, etc. A communication server was installed allowing regions to send information to groups and intergroups. The group database is available via the website on mobile phones and PDAs. There is also an online shop, where members can subscribe to AA bulletins and buy AA literature.

Poland has its own National Telephone Helpline 801 033 242 that is operated by volunteers. Workshops have been regularly organized at all levels of AA structure on the topic “How to Carry the Message via National Helpline and Internet”.

A new website was launched last year to give access to the required information on AA activities and events. It is now also a useful vehicle for reading AA literature. *Daily reflections* in Polish has been posted on a single website and some pamphlets like “The Jack Alexander Article About AA”, “Members of the Clergy Ask About Alcoholics Anonymous”, “Speaking at Non-AA Meetings” and “Understanding Anonymity” are also available.

## PORTUGAL

The formal AA service structure in Portugal has now 18 years. After a period of rough times, caused by some disunion and misconduct from some AA servants, we are now recovering, with more union and transparency between most of us.

We still have just a few fellow members to serve at all places in the structure, and that is visible at GSO Committees and Conference that always lack servants.

We are now trying to establish a formal ESM Delegate status in Portugal, to ensure a continuous participation in the future, because more and more we understand the need and benefits from participating and not being alone.

### Structure

We are now 91 groups (77 Portuguese speaking, 10 English, 1 French speaking, 1 Finnish speaking, 1 German speaking and 1 online Portuguese speaking). The great majority of groups are linked to the AA service structure via their GSR. At a Regional level, they gather in Areas. Four of these Areas don't have any Conference Delegate but the others have one Delegate each. We have 11 Areas so the annual meeting of the Conference should have 11 delegates, the board of trustees (3 Regional Trustees, 3 AA servants who manage the GSO and deal with every aspect of AA and 2 non-alcoholic Trustees) and the Chair of the Conference.

At this moment we have 7 delegates and 5 trustees. We have also 2 non-alcoholic trustees who are mostly available for PI actions.

AA Portugal has 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 Verde and Mozambique. They are listed in our website, we sell them European Portuguese literature and where the postal service works we send them our magazine *Partilhar*. During 2017 we offered a package of Literature to the three Mozambique's groups.

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

And at this moment we have launched a Service to Loners or Isolated Members that need to have some attention to grow and also an Online European Portuguese speaking group was launched and at this moment they are preparing to start the second weekly meeting.

### Literature and Publications

These used to be 2 separate committees but, due to lack of servants, they were united. This Committee is responsible for publishing our quarterly publications: magazine *Partilhar* and bulletin *Os Três Legados*.

The books and pamphlets publication is also their responsibility. The majority of such items is authorized translations from the English versions of AAWS Literature.

## **Finance**

Our finances are still 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.

Last year was the first one that we had a small income surplus that allowed us to buy some critical equipment to GSO, such as a new PC, office software and account software that eventually will allow us to have the “public service status” by the government and have tax reduction. We are working to have “strong” and stable finances for the next years.

## **Public Information and Institutions**

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

We are working on this committee dynamics and now we can see a more open attitude. Some new opportunities arose and we are taking advantage of them namely some contacts with outside agencies that are good channels for spreading our message.

We did a Public Service Announcement that was on TV during July this year. We organized a Round Table with Professionals that was attended mainly by health and prisons professionals.

We continue our work in the National Forum on Alcohols and Health and are seeing good results as we are having more contacts and agencies that want to cooperate.

We also will participate on the second Lisbon Addictions Conference on October 2017 with a poster and our Chair and one of the non-alcoholic trustees.

## **Answering Services**

On this committee, we are answering help requests that come via telephone and e-mail. We are keeping our schedule of personalized service where an AA servant answers the phone calls. We have a 7 servants pool – one for each day of the week. The majority of the servants answer the calls from 10:00 am till 10:00 pm but we are also introducing some reduced shifts in order to be able to have in this service members who are active professionally and have less time available. The Committee Chair answers the e-mails. We keep a statistic about all this.

## **Web**

We now have a new web platform, with new improvements of design and security web services. We provide also distribution list for Daily Reflection and a Literature order. We are also planning to deploy, in the near future the possibility of event register and subscribe.

## **Events**

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

## ROMANIA

The Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Romania in 2016 consists of almost 50 groups, three intergroups and three regions. The Board of Trustees is currently made up of seven alcoholics.

The main purpose of the trustees' service, is to inspire all service members in the A.A. Fellowship in Romania to improve the methods of carrying the A.A. message and protecting the spiritual values which result from the A.A. Traditions.

At every two years, each time in a different place, we hold our National Service Conference.

The Fellowship of A.A. in Romania is self-supporting through contributions from the groups and the sales of A.A. literature, but it seems not to be sufficient. Our delegates have to support all the cost for participation to the Conference.

We have just a few books published: *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *Living Sober*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *Came to Believe*, *As Bill Sees It*, *Daily Reflections* and we are continue to translate "Pass It On", and "Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers". Ten pamphlets have also been published and we are working on translating and publishing another ten. Our magazine, *Noi Insine* (We ourselves), with a circulation of about 200 copies, and a service bulletin with a circulation of 100 copies, are published twice a year (not at the same time).

Our G.S.O. maintains an official A.A. website, [www.alcooliciianonimi.ro](http://www.alcooliciianonimi.ro). Our website facilitates access to the groups' database and has a small, online shopping cart for A.A. literature. We also have a AA forum website and a website for our magazine [www.noiinsine.ro](http://www.noiinsine.ro)

Romania has its own country-wide phone help-line and we buy a preferential number for our 24h phone line +40770 CALLAA.

## **RUSSIA**

### **Groups Number**

AA Fellowship started in Russia in the late 80s. GSO had registered the first AA group from Moscow in 1987.

Currently there are more than 500 groups in Russia located in 120 locations. The groups are mostly concentrated in big cities. Some of them have several meetings a week.

Within the last several years we witness substantial growth of groups number in Russia, although we cannot state that the number of AA members grows.

### **Service Structure**

Russian AA Fellowship Service Conferences are held in Moscow annually, in early April, they last 4 days.

The Conference is attended by: group delegates from the groups which do not have local service structures, delegates of local AA service committees, Russian AA Service Board members, international delegates of Russian AA, Director of AA Service Office.

Within last years the voting participants number is not more than 40 people. The Conference establishes committees for producing recommendations for major AA service areas, elects Board Members. The Conference acts in accordance with the 'Russian AA Fellowship Service Guidelines'.

In 2012, several members of RSO supported by AA Service Foundation (FOAA) started the May meeting attended by representatives of about 50 groups from all over the country. They also call these meetings a 'Conference' in spite of GSO recommendation not to use the term 'Conference' as this event does not reflect collective conscience of Russian AA. This alternative meeting is still held with minor number of Russian groups' representatives. The publishing and distribution license for AA literature was transferred to the Russian GSB (Russian GSO) on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015.

Work done by the Russian GSB for preparation of Russian AA Service Guidelines, is on extreme importance for proper functioning of AA structure in AA. Frequently we have various issues and arguments related to holding and servicing the meetings. There are several reasons why these problems cannot be solved using US and Canada AA Service Guidelines. We need to have our own basis, which takes into consideration our current stage of development, and a single source containing all answers basing on 12 Service Concepts and 12 Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. Therefore, Russian GSB committee puts its best efforts to complete our Guidelines up to the starting date of our nearest Conference, where the Guidelines will be amended and approved by delegates.

### **Finance**

Contributions in 2014 amounted to RUR 700 000, RUR 962 000 in 2015, RUR 811 000 in 2016 and RUR 528 163 in first half year 2017.



## Literature

In 2017, 10 books are published in Russia in Russian:

Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Living Sober, Came to Believe, Daily Reflections, AA Comes of Age, As Bill Sees It, Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, US and Canada AA Service Guidelines, Language of the Heart. Alcoholics Anonymous (4<sup>th</sup> edition) is published in full version with the stories as well as the short working version without the stories.

40 brochures and pamphlets are also published, in addition to the books.

Starting 2008, we started working on more precise Russian translation of Alcoholics Anonymous. In 2013, we started preparing several amended chapters for publication.

The groups are provided with literature by the General Service Board of AA Russia through regional service structures (litcoms, intergroups). Local service structures establish prices for literature in accordance with local condition but not more than 20% higher than the price established by the Russian General Service Board.

As far as literature publishing and distribution is concerned please note that in spite of lacking a license for AA literature publishing, AA Service Foundation(FOAA) keeps publishing and selling AA literature selling major literatures at dumping prices (Big Book, 12 x 12, Living Sober, Daily Reflections). In accordance with the agreement with GSO AA Service Foundation is entitled to sell literature purchased from the license holder (Russian GSO). AA Service Foundation also publishes and distributes literature which was not approved by AA International, for instance, Traditions Workbook brochure and Hazelden literature.

We would also like to inform that AA Service Foundation (FOAA) issues the AA Big Book dedicated to Moscow region AA 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, this translation was not approved by GSO.

## Interaction with the Public

### Medical institutions:

Russian medical institutions committee of the RSO stays in close contact with the top Russian doctor in toxic substances addictions. Together with the local institutions and organizations participates in different events related to carrying the message such as round table conferences with doctors, events related to the Sobriety Holiday celebration as well as participating in doctors' conferences related to addictions. Information boards with AA information are installed at hospitals and smaller medical centers. Many AA meetings in Russia are held at addiction treatment centers.

### Penitentiary institutions:

Local service structures provide 12<sup>th</sup> Step work opportunities for AA members as well as supply books and brochures.

### Religious institutions:

Traditionally, we have the closest relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church, then with Catholic and Protestant Churches. Russian Orthodox Church representatives participate in our round tables, which results in opening AA groups at churches and publishing AA related information there.

### **Social and public institutions:**

Since recently we increased our activities in relationship with social services representatives – we have round table discussions with them, which results in more AA groups started at their premises.

Our cooperation with Moscow based public organizations may be an example. These organizations provide premises for local groups and intergroup meetings.

### **Police:**

AA groups together with local organizations hold meetings with police representatives. As a result we more meetings at local police stations and have AA related information located there.

Close cooperation with local authorities plays a significant role in organization of AA group meetings at police stations.

### **AA Groups**

Apart from a classic AA meetings format, Vesvalo, the international Russian speaking AA online meeting has been working for many years as well as Skype and Paltalk based groups 'Vnezavisimosti' (out-of-addiction), 'Planeta'. We also have an Internet streaming radio project RADIOAA.RU – 24x7 AA message through speakers, programs etc.

### **AA Events**

Traditionally, AA groups have annual celebration meetings dedicated to anniversaries of AA in their regions (August Meetings in Moscow, White Nights in St. Petersburg), where we invite our friends – priests, doctors, social workers etc. Also, in addition to celebration meetings, local groups have outside events (motor rallies) used for carrying the message in places still having no AA meetings. Local service structures hold various kinds of local service conventions – intergroup, district and area committees meetings, assemblies etc. Sharing experience with different town and cities helps us develop AA Fellowship.

### **Relationships with Foreign Countries**

Russian GSB has contacts with AA of Moldova, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, UK. Russian GSO also serves Russian speaking groups in Chisinau (Moldova), Pavlograd (Kazakhstan), Ulan-Bator (Mongolia), Mogilev and Lida (Belarus), Haifa (Israel), Stockholm, Helsinki, New York City, London, UK. We are in permanent contact with NYC GSO.

## RUSSIA

In the last August of this year, we celebrated 30 years of Alcoholics Anonymous of Russia. Now in Russia there are 630 six hundred thirty groups of AA. We work in more than one 150 cities of Russia. The growth of AA groups is connected with study of 12 steps and 12 traditions.

Russia - is a very large country. AA groups scattered throughout its territory from Kaliningrad to Kamchatka. On January 1, 2017 in the GSO of AA of Russia registered 630 AA groups. The years: 2012 - 475 AA groups; 2011 - 397 AA groups; 2010 - 366 AA groups). For a country with a population over 143 million people - it's not much enough, but it means we are a lot of works to do in this field.

General Service Office of AA in Russia serves for all AA groups in the Russian Federation, as well as providing assistance to foreign and Russian-speaking alone members and the whole AA group abroad. Russian-speaking groups hold meetings in different countries, such as Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Uzbekistan, England, Israel, Spain, USA, Finland and Sweden.

"AA Publishing Service" printing and publishing AA literature and officially registered Russian AA magazine - "Dozen."

In the past three years we can see an intensive process of self-consciousness of Russian-speaking AA groups as a whole. In 2011, we entered into a crisis stage of development. Problems that have accumulated in the service structure over many years, and caused the appearance of two conferences in Russia, the risk of loss of Service Office, isolation from the World Fellowship of AA, a very small increase of AA groups and other growing pains today encourage AA groups to reconsider their role and purpose. These problems touched absolutely all groups. And the same problems caused extraordinary growth of interest of AA Traditions and Principles.

Unlike previous years, a large number of seminars, speakers meetings and roundups which focused on AA Steps, Traditions and Principles are conducting in Russia now. Relevant circulation of AA literature was increased, and in turn, it was possible to reduce the price for AA books. The General Service Board has the appropriate committee, which deals with the organization of these actions. The Conference 2012 was adopted 5-year development plan, thanks to result of which, today, we see positive changes. For example, today in many prisons appeared AA literature. This work is a systematic work within the 5-year plan. The next step - the creation of AA groups in prisons. In this work we use the wonderful experience of Alcoholics Anonymous from Poland and USA.

In 2014, we invited the group of professionals, their work has been done to modernize the official website of Alcoholics Anonymous in Russia which existed for many years - [www.aarus.ru](http://www.aarus.ru) Moreover we have used as a model - [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) Site takes the first place through the search engines when typing the phrase "Alcoholics Anonymous" in Russian. We make sure that Internet users receive firsthand reliable information about AA. In electronic forms AA literature is available for reading on this web page, but protected from copying. Service committees actively use the Internet for their meetings.

Especially in the last 5 years online AA meetings on the Internet were widespread. We are increasingly aware that we have entered the information age, so as to be most useful, should use new tools. They are all more essentially effective in our country, with huge distances between cities, especially in Siberia and the Far East.

## SLOVAKIA

Slovakia, officially Slovak Republic is located in Central Europe bordering with Austria, Poland, Czech Republic, Ukraine and Hungary. The population is a little over 5 million, the capital city is Bratislava and the official language is Slovak.

### A.A. Structure

In 2015, Slovak A.A. celebrated its 25th year anniversary. As of 2017 we have 50 registered groups in 35 cities with approximately 400 members across 5 geographical areas.

We have one English and one Hungarian/Slovak speaking group. Groups can choose to participate in their local area's Intergroup. The fellowship is registered as an Association with the Slovak Ministry of Interior under its legal name "Združenie pre služby Anonymným alkoholikom v Slovenskej republike". The General Assembly for the legal Association is our Fellowship's *General Service Conference*.

### General Service Conference

Each year, generally in march, we hold our *General Service Conference* in a city approved by the previous conference. The GSC is made up of ONE delegate from each group willing to participate in the GSC and members of the General Service Board. Standing committee chairs are also part of the GSC but as non-voting participants (from the Organizational, Literature, Finance, Service Manual and Public Relations committees). International and local A.A. observers are encouraged and regularly invited to our GSC. Our A.A. members attended many GSCs in other countries, which proved to be a great source of experience. During the past General Service Conferences we dedicated ample amount of time to present, explain and amend our current Service Manual, which has proven to be an invaluable asset to our fellowship. We used other countries' service manuals as a starting point and customized it to better fit our current local needs.

### General Service Board

The General Service board is made up of 6-9 Class B Trustees, up to 5 Class A Trustees, Chairman of the Board, Vice-chairman of the Board, Treasurer, one delegate from our magazine "Prameň", 2 ESM/WSM delegates and the GSO chairman.

Committee chairs are also part of the GSB but in a non-voting advisory capacity (from Organizational, Literature, Finance, Service Manual and Public Relations committees). GSB trustee nominations, elections and their service responsibilities are guided by the Conference approved Service Manual.

GSB oversees our **General Service Office, which** is currently located in Nitra. It is managed by the Conference elected GSO coordinator.

### Service

Most of our groups have a formally elected group secretary, treasurer, GSR and an Intergroup delegate. GSRs sometimes serve as the group's GSC delegates when it comes to smaller groups. Intergroups coordinate their group activities regarding local conventions, events and meetings in hospitals, prisons and local media outreach. Our PI committee has been organizing and attending conventions and conferences with public, doctors and other professionals, conducting interviews in press or radio. We have regular A.A and informational meetings in 6 hospitals, 2 prisons and 3 rehab centres.

An important part of service is Sponsorship which is also on the rise but is mostly concentrated in more populated metropolitan areas. During the year, groups with more experience regarding the 12 Steps conduct Step study workshops at different locations throughout Slovakia. This helps to spread the program of recovery, promote sponsorship and involvement in service.

Some members use Skype to sponsor people in remote locations until more sponsors become available. This year we will be hosting our 20th Slovak National Convention in the city of Trnava. The convention is also attended by our friends from other countries. During conventions we cooperate with other 12 Step programs who are welcome to attend and create their own meetings. Our magazine "Prameň" is published quarterly with about 300 copies per issue. It contains personal stories, guest articles, meeting directory and articles highlighting A.A. traditions and service. We established cross-country cooperation including sponsorship between groups, members and service structures, mainly with Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, Hungary, UK, Denmark and USA. We have been blessed to be able to participate in the past European Service Meetings which has been a tremendous source of information and experience during the past few years. Our upcoming plans are to promote Service and Traditions workshops because we see a lack of their understanding and more importantly their application within our Fellowship.

### **Relations with Other Countries**

The inspiring relations we have with Poland through common attendance at AA events, by having our observers at Polish Service conference and through 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.

### **Literature**

A.A. Slovakia distributes numerous General Service Conference approved literature in the 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

Our latest addition will be the book, "Experience, Strength and Hope". We are also in the process of making revisions to our 3rd edition of the Big Book. Currently, our Big Book is printed without any personal stories.

### **Magazine**

Since April 2002 we have been published our magazine PRAMENĚ 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 300 copies. They are distributed to the treatment centers, libraries and AA groups. This magazine is self-supported.

## **Finance**

Our complete service structure is made up of volunteers without having any paid positions. Our costs are mainly for GSO rent, printing and publishing costs, PI related costs and for organizing conventions. Our major source of financing has come from the sale of literature and then from group/intergroup/member contributions. Unfortunately, some groups belonging to a specific Intergroup had decided not contribute funds to GSO but rather keep their funds at their local Intergroup level. They also decided not to participate in any national activities in cooperation with other Intergroups. This was mainly due to personal disagreements between some members within our Fellowship. We are making efforts to explain the importance of applying all of our Traditions during conventions, meetings and articles published in our magazine.

## **Internet and Social Media**

Our official website ([www.alkoholici-anonymni.sk](http://www.alkoholici-anonymni.sk)) contains group and meeting information (including phone numbers) and is regularly updated, mostly with local events. Currently, a new website is being developed, mainly to make it mobile friendly and enhance our meeting search capabilities. We have an A.A. e-mail group called Sober space which was established in 2006. It has more than 500 Slovak and Czech speaking members living all over the world. GSO registered Czech-Slovak Skype group offers daily meetings on Skype. They also participate in our GSC and are an invaluable resource for people unable to get to a meeting in their area. We have a Czech-Slovak private, invitation only Facebook group where members share their experience, strength and hope.

## 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.aa-drustvo.si) with relevant information and the list of meetings in Slovenia. E-mail addresses: [info@aa-slovenia.si](mailto:info@aa-slovenia.si), and [international@aa-slovenia.si](mailto:international@aa-slovenia.si).



## **SPAIN**

### **STRUCTURE**

Currently the structure of Spain consists of 25 Areas divided into 4 regional zones. There are 614 groups (of which 13 are located in Prisons) with about 9,600 members. The General Service Board is composed of 2 Trustees (Class A non-alcoholic) and 8 Trustees (Class B alcoholic). The latter are further divided with 4 Trustees in the Headquarters and 1 Trustee in each of the 4 regional zones.

We maintain contact with the non-Spanish speaking groups in order to work together and help them integrate more closely with the AA Spanish structure, if they so wish.

We continue participating in Service Forums, which are held in each of the Regional Zones. Class B Trustees attend these Forums in order to facilitate the smooth relationship between the General Service Board, and the General Service Office and the groups, thus making the exchange of experiences between the different Areas who are participating in the Forum more meaningful.

### **GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE**

Since the last ESM in 2015, we have held the 37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> General Service Conferences.

The 37<sup>th</sup> Conference was held on March 24, 25, 26, 2016 with the theme, “Our Growth depends upon our Unity.”

The 38<sup>th</sup> Conference was held on April 13, 14, 15, 2017 with the theme, “Our Literature, Our Wisdom.”

### **GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE**

The running of our office continues to be possible thanks to the excellent dedication and work of our two contracted employees.

On October 9-12, 2015, the 10<sup>th</sup> National Convention was held in Benicàssim (Castellón).

We continue holding Public Information meetings in “white” zones, (areas where there are not any groups). In addition, the Board sponsored various activities to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> of June in Zaragoza in 2016 and in Huelva in 2017.

Two members of the General Service Board attended the 24<sup>th</sup> World Service Meeting held in Rey Brook, New York on October 23-27 2016 with the theme One World, One AA, One Language of the Heart.

In 2015 and 2016 we attended professional medical congresses both in medical settings as well as work settings with the presence of Stands and speeches given by our President D. Laureano López Rivas (Class A Trustee).

On June 12, 2017, in its 14<sup>th</sup> edition of the Journalism Award for Road Safety in the Category of Solidarity, the Linea Directa Foundation awarded the prize to Alcoholics Anonymous of Spain for its work in raising social awareness and helping people with problems of alcoholism—one of the main causes of traffic accidents.

At the ceremony, our President gratefully appreciated the recognition of AA while at the same time declining the economic compensation associated with the prize.

## **FINANCE**

In 2015 and 2016 the voluntary contributions of the members and the groups did not completely cover the budgets. However, the effective management of the financial resources by the General Service Office allowed the maintenance of the Reserve Funds at a similar level to previous years. Thus, the economic situation today is sufficient to deal with our needs.

We continue to contribute to the World Literature Fund

## **LITERATURE**

Currently we deal with approximately 500 requests for literature from groups, areas and individuals. Our sales of literature continue at the same rate as 2015.

We continue with our publications, "Akron-1935" and "Compartiendo" ("Sharing" in Spanish) with the number of subscriptions of more than 2,000 per year and with a plea for more subscriptions. We also send 430 copies of "Akron-1935" to non-alcoholic professionals

## **INTERNET**

We have changed the web page of Spanish AA to include information in both Spanish and in English. There has been an increase in the number of people visiting the site. We are able to respond quickly and personalize the consultations that people ask about our program of recovery for themselves or for family members, sending them to nearby areas or groups.

The web site is [www.alcoholicos-anonimos.org](http://www.alcoholicos-anonimos.org)

## **SPONSORSHIP**

Currently we are not sponsoring any country.

## SWEDEN

### Structure

A.A. in Sweden was founded in 1956. Today we have about 460 groups; there are also English-, Finnish-, Icelandic-, Polish-, Russian- and Spanish-speaking meetings. There are also about 20 Swedish-speaking groups abroad and three online groups.

The General Service Board consists of eight trustees, one from each of the six regions and one Class A members and two international delegates. The trustees of the board and the international delegates are elected by the Service Conference.

Assisting the General Service Board is:

- the members of the Board of Association Alcoholics Anonymous in Sweden
- the following committees: Finance, Economy, Information, Literature, Nominations, Policy, IT, National Hotline and Archive
- the General Service Office

The committees are composed of members with sound professional knowledge in conjunction with solid A.A. experience, which facilitates their handling of their various agendas. The person who calls the committees together is a member of the General Service Board, except for the Nomination Committee.

The Alcoholics Anonymous Association in Sweden is a registered non-profit association, founded in 2001 and represented by the General Service Board. The association runs the publishing business and is also responsible for the General Service Office. The General Service Office has one full-time and one half-time employee.

For all the above assignments a clear description of the service post and the qualifications desired is provided.

A.A. in Sweden has had its current structure since 1999. The GSB decided in December 2012 to review the structure for central service and appointed for that purpose a working group, which has submitted a final report in December 1, 2014. This report is implemented since august 2015. The final report also includes a comprehensive review of our *Service Manual*, which now has been in work for one and a half year.

### Literature/Publishing

The approved A.A. literature today consists of 11 translated books and one book published by A.A. in Sweden. There are 20 booklets and pamphlets, in addition to decals, shades, CDs, DVDs in Swedish.

The magazine *Bulletinen* – “the meeting between the meetings” – is published six times a year and is economically self-supporting through subscription fees.

We also have an excellent newsletter, *Servicebladet*, published four times a year, which contains service information from GSB, International delegates, The Alcoholics Anonymous Association Board in Sweden, GSO and *Bulletinen*.

## **Information**

The Swedish website, [www.aa.se](http://www.aa.se), has been expanded and is an important link in the network of carrying the message. The meeting list is available. During the past year about 1,500 literature orders were made via the webshop, i.e., 90% of the total sales. There are today about 15 local information committees.

The new website is now working with the latest technology since August 2015.

## **Finances**

A.A. in Sweden is still not self-supporting by own voluntary contributions. Approximately 40% of our income comes from the sales of literature.

A.A. in Sweden has decided to pay the full fee for two delegates to the World Service Meeting, hoping that by doing so it will make it possible for new countries in A.A. 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.

Events during 2016/2017

In 2016 we had an extra day in connection to the Service Conference in April. The theme for the Conference was "Keep it Simple".

The Service Conference in 2017 was held April 8 – 10 with the theme "One World, One AA, one Language of the Heart". Next Service Conference will be held in April 6-8 2018. The Theme for That Conference will be "The Understanding of Principal before Personality"

Participating in the Conference are the members of GSB and delegates from the six regions and one employee from GSO. Also attending were one member of the Association Alcoholics Anonymous, one representative from *Bulletinen* and the international delegates. There were also guests from our Nordic countries.

The two World Service delegates participated as delegates in the World Service Meeting in New York.

The Country Meeting in 2016 was held August 5-6 with the theme "Keep it Simple". In 2016 the meeting were held in August 5-6 and had the theme "One World, One AA, one Language of the Heart".

The Big Book is now translated into Swedish (3 TH Edition) and we are happy to say that it sells very well. The Literature Committee is now busy working with booklets and pamphlets, so they are in line with the new translation of the Big Book.

## SWITZERLAND (FRENCH AND ITALIAN SPEAKING)

Currently there are 49 groups in French and Italian speaking Switzerland (further referred to as "AASRI"): 4 groups are in Italian speaking Switzerland and 45 in French speaking Switzerland.

### General Structure

AASRI is divided into three areas, which are represented on the General Service Board by a trustee who is elected by the Conference. In these three areas there are five Inter-Groups, four in French speaking part and one in the Italian-speaking part.

### General Service Board

Currently the General Service Board is composed of 11 class B Trustees and 1 class A Trustee, who presides the Board. Till June 2017, we had two Trustees of class A and hopefully at the AA Conference 2018, the new class A trustee will join the Board. The General Service Board meets four times a year and carries out the affairs of AASRI as a whole including, where applicable, execution of the decisions of the Conference.

### AA Conference

The General Conference of AASRI takes place each year in March and lasts two days.

Each group is supposed to send one delegate (with voting right) and one substitute (without voting right).

The main 2017 Conference committee topics/questions included:

The Conference analysed whether it would be possible to create a committee of past Trustees (delegates) bearing uniquely consultative function, in order to avoid making the same mistakes based on experience of previous servants and sponsorship in the service, as mentioned in the General Service Manual (p.46 ed. 2007-2008). – *The Conference decided not to create such committee but rather promote sponsorship in AA Service.*

Considering that Trustees and members of Public Information Office (BIPI) have external relationships, the Conference elaborated on the advantages and disadvantages to increase the duration of their mandate, e.g. 3x2 instead of current 1x4. – *The Conference decided to maintain the current duration period of the service, namely 4 years (non renewable).*

Upon suggestion from some local group/s, the Conference considered whether it would be possible to decrease the numbers of Inter-Groups in our regions (AASRI) and which advantages and inconveniences it would bring. - *No decision was taken in respect of this topic; hence, it was reminded that each group is autonomous and each Inter-Group decides how many meetings it needs per year. Currently there is no desire to merge the existing Inter-Groups.*

### Finance

We are proud that for the past years AASRI was within its planned budget.

The finance policy is quite sane; groups are supporting their service structures.

## Web Site

AASRI has its own web site: [www.aasri.org](http://www.aasri.org)

On this website there is a general information about AA, AA literature, detailed information and time-table of meetings, as well as session dedicated to members, where any AA member having the login information may obtain AA related information, manuals, minutes of the Board Meetings, Inter-Groups and of various committees, various international documentation, etc.

## Public Information

Each Inter-Group has a public information committee which is responsible for carrying the message in hospitals, prisons, local authorities, etc. The Chairman of such committee is a part of the public information office (BIPi) which is presided by a Trustee responsible for public information. This way we tend to harmonise each action in order to act in unity. Various actions, like advertising on cantonal or federal levels are managed on the level of the General Service Board. In the past few years, our Trustees class A represented our fellowship publicly. We strongly appreciate their support in helping us preserve our anonymity in carrying AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

On the level of these public information committees, currently, our region has a long lasting stable collaboration with various hospitals and rehabilitation centres.

Billboards are having lots of success helping us be more visible for everyone; it is quite effective and commonly considered as an excellent tool in the ratio of price and quality.

Carrying AA message into prisons is not performed on this day as in Switzerland each canton has its own laws and systems. The cantonal authorities in French-speaking part are very reluctant for AA members to carry their message in prisons as it implicates active involvement of these authorities (assistance before, during and after AA public information meetings).

In general, there is a smooth functioning of public information; we have printed out and on all the levels of our service structure distributed (for further distribution inside and outside of the Fellowship) various pamphlets and flyers in Italian and French speaking Switzerland. The main presentation flyer (with young people image) is now harmonised in accordance with the one that the German speaking Switzerland is distributing. Accordingly, we try to have the same flyers and pamphlets all over the country in three main national languages.

## Helpline

Help-line phones are managed by public information committees, being supervised by Inter-Groups. There is an annual calendar according to which each group takes the phone for two weeks or so and groups' members share the service.

## Literature

French speaking literature is published by "Editions AA francophoneeuropéennes", a company established by AASRI, French –speaking Belgium and France. AA World Services Inc. grants license for French speaking literature in Europe to one of the three countries, namely to the AA General Services of the French –speaking Belgium which mandates "Editions AA francophoneeuropéennes" to print the books for the three countries. It reflects unity and fruitful collaboration between our countries.

According to the annual financial statements and reports of the Trustee responsible for literature, the sale of AA literature in AASRI is quite stable.

Some groups offer to the new-comers the Big Book or the Living Sober book. Pamphlets are managed by the AA Literature Committee of General Services, whereas flyers are managed by the BIPI.

To give you some indicative figures the prices of our main literature on this day are as follows:

- Big Book (hard cover) – CHF 20.00
- 12x12 – CHF 16.00
- AA Comes of Age (soft cover) – CHF22.00
- Daily reflections – CHF 10.00

### **Country Sponsorship**

Currently AASRI does not sponsor and is not sponsored by any other country, but we rather tend to unite more and more within French speaking Europe.

CEFE (Carrefour Européen Francophone d'Echange)

The CEFE is a committee which meets at each 3 Conferences, in French and Italian speaking Switzerland, in French-speaking Belgium, and in France. The ESM, the WSM delegates and the External Relations Trustee always participate in CEFE, other trustees or other trusted servants may also participate in the committee.

There are more and more actions that are taken to improve collaboration between our three countries. As afore-mentioned, AA literature is managed by a common literature committee and legal entity with representative of each of the three countries represented on its Board of Directors. There is a new project which is currently under elaboration of “Editions AA francophoneeuropéennes” and our three countries for creating and printing of a perpetual calendar in French language with citations from “less known” AA literature. Once the project will be elaborated, it will be presented to each of the respective Conferences.

The committee brings its motions and then each respective Conference takes vote in each respective country.

For example, upon proposal of CEFE in 2017 AASRI Conference has decided / wished:

To regularly place on our web site [www.aasri.org](http://www.aasri.org) Minutes of Conferences of French-speaking Belgium and of France.

To organise a common service meeting. The committee organising this common service meeting will be composed of members of the three countries, preferably knowing CEFE.

In respect to the WSM delegate, the alteration between Switzerland and Belgium would no longer be systematic, neither there will be obligation of permanent delegate from France and that the common sense should prevail in each particular situation (in case if one country does not have a delegate, in spite of the rotation between the countries, the candidate for delegate position may now be elected from any of the three countries)

The charges related to the WSM delegates will now be distributed between the countries as follows: 1/3 Switzerland, 1/3 France and 1/3 Belgium.

## TURKEY

On year 1988, the A.A. members living in Turkey, after having gone through meetings with Aegean University Psychiatry department, they have initiated first A.A. Meetings, gathering once a week taking place in the University Hospital. The same year Istanbul and Ankara groups were formed. Today we have about 30 active groups all around Turkey.

On year 2001, A.A. Turkey General Service Committee and Office were established. On year 2010 working principles of 12 concepts adjusted to Turkey and Committee Office Job Descriptions were adapted and accepted. Turkey General Service Committee organizes a country wide convention twice a year. Regional committees organize other regional meetings several times a year. Turkey General Service Committee, Regional Committees and Groups organises panels, speeches and meetings to transmit A.A.'s message. They provide a helping hand to any alcoholic in need, and directs them to a related group.

Turkey General Service Committee provides all book and booklet needs of all A.A.

Group translates books to be published and maintains and updates ([www.adsizalkolikler.com](http://www.adsizalkolikler.com)) website. Coordinates relationships between groups.

Turkey General Service Committee serves as the protector of 12Traditions and represents A.A. in national addiction related conventions and government institutions. Since as Turkish A.A. we do not have an officially recognized identity and we have difficulty presenting ourselves in some governmental events and institutions, we are working through working on gaining an official identity on our 44th General Council Meeting.



## UKRAINE

The first group of Alcoholics Anonymous appeared in Ukraine in 1989. At present there are about 114 active A.A. groups in our Ukraine. They are attended by about 1,300 A.A. members. (NOTE: This includes eight groups in the part of Eastern Ukraine where the fighting is ongoing and which at present is not under the control of the Ukrainian government).

There are four functioning regional service structures: Kyiv, Volyn, Western Ukraine and Poltava. The Eastern Ukrainian Region is not represented on the General Service Board. The former trustee from that region stepped down from the board in May 2017 saying that the region as such has stopped functioning due to a shortage of members willing to participate in service work. This is in large part due to the ongoing military conflict in the Eastern Region, which effectively split the region in two and resulted in about five groups joining the Russian service structure. There are five A.A. groups with 15 members in the part of the Eastern Region, which is under Ukrainian government control. The Southern Ukraine A.A. region has not been functioning as a region, but General Service Board members have had several meetings with A.A. members from that region this year with the aim of getting them to become active as a region. Ten groups in Crimea, which was taken over and annexed by Russia in 2014, are no longer part of A.A. Ukraine's service structure. They continue to function and are listed as A.A. of the Crimean Republic. (This information was taken from the A.A. of the Crimean Republic website).

### General Service Conference

Our 19<sup>th</sup> regular General Service Conference was held in Lviv in May 2017. Participants in the Conference included four trustees representing four A.A. regions, the international delegate to the World and European Service Meetings, delegates to each of the four Conference committees, the chairwoman of the "Pravlinnia" (the committee overseeing the General Service Office), the office worker at the General Service Office and the editor of A.A. Ukraine's publication, *Dzherelo*.

The Conference was held over a three-day period as compared two days last year, giving more time for participants to talk about and discuss important A.A. activity and service work.

Poland A.A.'s International Delegate Pawel Wyganowski attended the Conference as a guest observer. Pawel was with us throughout the Conference adding to the positive A.A. spirit and sharing his experience with us. He gave a talk on the opening day on the Conference's theme "Participation - a key to recovery."

For the first time, we also had six presentations by Conference participants on various topics such as Unity, Carrying the Message, Service, Traditions, and A.A.'s Three Legacies. Another first was having a speaker's meeting at the end of the first day and including a "What's on your Mind" sharing session at the end of days one and two of the Conference.

We introduced a time clock to our deliberations, limiting sharing and reading of reports to a set time. This helped move the conference along and helped us get through our agenda on time. Participants seemed fresher and more relaxed and shared as much.

The Conference voted to put together a Convention Committee to begin the organizational work and site selection leading up to our 30-year anniversary convention in 2019.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Conference, which was held in Poltava in May 2016, brought together trustees from four of six A.A. regions, delegates to each of the four Conference committees, two international delegates to the World and European Service Meetings, and the editor of A.A. Ukraine's publication, *Dzherelo*. A few representatives of local A.A. groups also attended the Conference.

The newest Southern Ukraine Region, comprising A.A. groups from the cities of Odessa, Mykolayiv and Kherson, did not send any representatives.

Nigel and Charles, from UK's General Service Board attended our conference as observers, and helped make our Conference a success. Nigel and Charles addressed the topic "A.A. – a Fellowship without Borders," in their talks at the Conference. The mere presence of Charles and Nigel added to the overall A.A. spirit at our Conference. Their eagerness to share their knowledge and experience was balanced also with their desire to learn about A.A. in Ukraine.

The incoming and outgoing International Delegates from AA in Ukraine who attended the 66<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference in New York in April 2016 as observers shared their experience and impressions from the Conference in NYC.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Conference voted to accept an updated version of the Statute of the Ukrainian Service Centre of A.A. (Ukrainian G.S.O.), which had been revised and approved by the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference. The updated version was updated to comply with Ukrainian law. It also voted to approve a 16-page booklet with re-edited translations of basic A.A. material including the Preamble, the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, 12 Concepts, How It Works and Declaration of Unity and Responsibility Pledge.

### **General Service Board**

The General Service Board of A.A. in Ukraine at present consists of five members: four Class B trustees elected at regional service conferences and one international delegate to the World and European Service Meetings. We currently do not have any Class A trustees. We meet monthly (more often if necessary) on Skype and have three board meetings where we meet face-to-face.

The General Service Board will be holding its first ever board inventory at its November meeting and will be assisted former U.S. and Canada General Service Board member and International Delegate Bob Wilcox, who will link up through Skype. Ukraine's A.A. established a relationship with Bob when he attended our General Service Conference in 2016.

### **Committees**

We have four active standing Conference committees: Literature, Information, Organizational and Finance.

### **General Service Office**

The office of the Ukrainian Service Centre of A.A. (Ukraine's General Service Office) relocated from Kyiv to Poltava in May 2016. It was re-registered in accordance with Ukrainian law in December 2015. It is open three days a week and has one part-time paid employee. The office manager, who volunteers her time, is also head of the Office's oversight committee ("Pravlinnia"). A.A. members and service representatives in Ukraine continue to address the improvement of the office's work.

### **Literature**

There is a large number and adequate selection of A.A. books and pamphlets approved by General Service Conference in the Ukrainian A.A. office. A.A. literature is distributed through the office by mail, through regional service structures, as well as at weekend forums and conventions in several cities in Ukraine.

We continue to focus our efforts on building up an inventory of A.A. literature in Ukraine. This includes preparing layout for printing, and working on translations and license agreements. We are working in close contact with A.A.'s G.S.O. office in New York.

The literature committee continues to translate brochures into the Ukrainian language. Two brochures were completed and printed in Ukrainian in 2017 – *Problems Other than Alcohol and Questions and Answers about Sponsorship*. One, *This is A.A.*, was re-edited and is going through the approval process. Two, *Understanding Anonymity* and *A Newcomer Asks* were approved recently and will be printed shortly. We have also translated *If You Are A Professional* and *Is There an Alcoholic in the Workplace* and have begun work on *Jack Alexander about A.A.* and *The 12 Concepts Illustrated*.

We have also printed the Russian language translations of A.A. Comes of Age and Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers in Ukraine and other literature which was translated into the Russia language by A.A. in Russia.

All newly translated and printed pamphlets, as well as those that are reprinted, are designed to look like the A.A. literature printed by A.A.W.S in New York.

We have re-translated the Big Book in the Ukrainian language and are awaiting editorial approval from A.A.W.S. We are continuing our work of gathering recovery stories from A.A. members in Ukraine as well as translating selected stories from the English language Fourth Edition of the Big Book.

The A.A. magazine in Ukraine *Dzherelo* (“Wellspring”) is published quarterly and is distributed mostly among A.A. groups and members in Ukraine. The magazine is printed in Ukraine’s two most widely used languages, Ukrainian and Russian. In order to optimize costs, we now print 100 copies of the magazine, selling it at cost price.

## **Finances**

Our projected expenses in the budget for 2017 totalled 136,240 UAH (app. \$5,240). The projected income was 137,360 UAH (app. \$5,283). In the first 4 months of 2017 we actually spent 33,315 UAH (app. \$1,281) and took in 63,770 UAH (app. \$2,452).

In the first four months of 2017 we received 51,455 UAH (81 % of the total income for that period) from the distribution of A.A. literature; voluntary contributions from A.A. groups and regions in Ukraine totalled 5,673 UAH (8 %). We also continue to pay off a debt of 52,000 UAH (\$2,000 USD) that we incurred to pay for legal services to re-register our general service office and bring it into compliance with Ukraine’s laws. Due to our challenging financial situation, at this point, it is not possible for us to pay for our international delegate to attend the WSM and the ESP or to pay transportation costs for our invited A.A. guests.

Informational materials and A.A. group directories are published with funds from contributions from A.A. members and groups.

Our monthly income allows us to pay for office rental, wages for our part-time office worker, office supplies and equipment, telephone and Internet access.

## **Meetings, Forums**

More than a dozen major A.A. celebratory forums are held throughout Ukraine during the year. Two quarterly meetings of the General Service Board, held in Lutsk (July) and Kyiv (February), coincide with the forums.

Representatives from Ukraine A.A.’s General Service Conference take part in service conferences in Poland. The International Delegate attended the World Service Meeting in New York in October 2016, and the General Service Conferences of Czech A.A. in January and Italy A.A. in March/April of 2017. He will be attending the European Service Meeting in October 2017.

We also continue to organize service workshops to share, learn and carry the message within our own A.A. community. Seminars on Steps, Traditions, Concepts, Carrying the Message, Sponsorship, Home Group and other topics have been organized by Regions, with the Kyiv Region being most involved in this service work.

A large A.A. group from the Kyiv Region continues to host annual three-day A.A. sharing gatherings with an A.A. speaker from the U.S.

Our General Service Board is reaching out more to Ukraine's A.A. members. Board members and A.A. members involved in service at the regional level attended special outreach meetings held mainly in cities with new groups. Board members also attended local forums/conventions at which they manned an informational table and spoke about A.A. Ukraine's service structure and General Service Office to A.A. members.

In December 2016 four board members held a special meeting with A.A. members in the Volyn Region in which groups had stopped sending 7th tradition contributions to the General Service Office. They talked to about a dozen A.A. members there about service, listened to them and answered questions. At the Region's service conference this spring, conference participants voted to begin sending contributions to the General Service Office again and have followed through.

### **Public Information**

We use the print and online media by supplying them with informational articles about A.A., as well as announcements about the time and place of A.A. meetings. We have good experience in organizing press conferences with television journalists before A.A. forums/conventions. Radio interviews are also an important part of the work we do in bringing the A.A. ideas to the general public.

For the past nine years interaction with state social services has brought fruitful results – passing on our experience about dealing with an alcohol problem. We also provide literature racks with A.A. brochures to hospitals, detoxification and rehabilitation centres, and prisons and make sure that they are refilled with literature.

### **Prisons**

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

An A.A. meeting has also been held in the Poltava women's correctional facility # 65 for three years. Meetings are held there monthly.

An A.A. group which was started in the Zhytomyr correctional facility # 4 more than 2 years ago is still going and another one began in Berezan recently. Meetings are expected to be taken to two other correctional facilities in the Kyiv Region soon.

### **Internet**

The Internet site of A.A. in Ukraine, [www.aa.org.ua](http://www.aa.org.ua), has been in operation for 11 years. It has information about the "Twelve Steps of A.A." and "Twelve Traditions of A.A.", and lists addresses and meetings times of A.A. meetings in Ukraine. There are also links to web resources of A.A. in other countries and to the European and World A.A. Internet sites. The sections "Announcements" and "News" are constantly updated with information about upcoming A.A. events held in various cities in Ukraine and in other countries.

A "Conference" section appears on our website, in which we place the latest information on the activities of the General Service of A.A. in Ukraine. We are working on improving the look and content of our website.

We continue to hold committee and General Service Board meetings on Skype.

### **International contacts**

We interact with the A.A. service structures in Poland, the European office in the UK 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.

Our international delegate participated in the 24th World Service Meeting in New York City in October 2016 and will be at the European Service meeting in York, England, in October 2017. He also attended the General Service Conferences of Czech A.A. in January and Italy A.A. in March/April of 2017.

He shared his experience and impressions from the Conferences at Ukraine's General Service Conference, at the two conventions – Lviv and Lutsk - and will likely do so at several other upcoming forums/conventions.

Two representatives from A.A. Ukraine attended Poland's General Service Conference in November 2016. In April 2017 two representatives from A.A. Ukraine attended a corrections conference in Poland.

Our Polish friends regularly participate in service workshops and A.A. conventions in Ukraine. The Katowice region helps the Kyiv and Eastern Ukraine regions in their A.A. service work including workshops on the Steps, Traditions and service principles. Several regions in Poland continue to offer support to the Western A.A. region in Ukraine.

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

### **Conclusion**

A.A. in Ukraine continues to gain new experience to overcome certain difficulties in its development. We have been faced with financial problems. We cannot cover the expenses of international delegates; we were forced to raise the price of A.A. literature. In the past three years, literature prices have stabilized.

We continue to rely on our A.A. friends from the other countries to help us to set and develop new priorities and ways of carrying the A.A. message and to strengthen and grow our Fellowship here in Ukraine.

A.A. Ukraine was also helped this year by a generous donation from our fellow A.A.'s in British Columbia, Canada, who purchased a total of 800 Big Books and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, for discounted price made possible by the International Literature Fund, a gift for which we are very grateful.

# **Committees & Workshops**

## SERVICE COMMITTEE

Chair: **Rita M** Italy

Alternate: **Dagur H** Iceland

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Johan R – *Belgium (Flemish)*

Iliana T - *Bulgaria*

Marko A – *Finland*

Jürgen R – *German Speaking Europe*

Brian J – *Great Britain*

Eleftherios S - *Greece*

Dagur H - *Iceland*

Pat D - *Ireland*

Rita M - *Italy*

Rimantas M - *Lithuania*

Alan T - *Malta*

Magdalena O – *Netherlands*

Valerii T – *Russia*

Jose G – *Spain*

Yury T - *Ukraine*

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

1. Share your experience on how we can make the ESM more well known at the group level.

**The groups are in contact with their General Service Representatives which participate at Regional forums. In those assemblies either the international delegate can either speak about his or her experience or their report can be read.**

**The report should also be available on the website.**

**Some countries, where possible, print a report in their quarterly magazine/journal.**

**The ESM should also be discussed at conference.**

2. Please share your experience about the period of sobriety after which it's recommended to serve not just the group, but AA in general. What happens if a group chooses a person with a short period of sobriety as their representative? What is the recommended period of sobriety before beginning one's service?

**Service starts with making coffee and welcoming newcomers. The group should support a person who has a short period of sobriety.**

**When we talk about serving AA in general acceptance is the key which leads to the sobriety necessary to be in service. From this point on AA usually asks for a period of two years sobriety.**

**Having the chance to continue in service in AA the sobriety increases and we are able to become responsible for the service we are asked to do.**

3. Do you have Service Forums? How do the findings or conclusions reach the level of the groups?

**Not all countries present hold service forums/workshops/seminars.**

**Where they have service forums/workshops/seminars very few alcoholics find it important to participate. They are not very popular but the findings or conclusions reach the groups through a written report.**

4. What is the role of the AA member, who has many years of sobriety, in service work?

**We are in service thanks to the example of who served AA before us.**

**Using the same treatment that has been used with me should be used with the person that comes after me.**

**With encouragement, trying to be a sponsor when requested with a positive attitude, the AA member who has many years of sobriety should stay out of the way leading others with his/her example.**

**On the other hand encourage with our testimony those who are afraid to accept the responsibilities.**

5. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 20<sup>th</sup> ESM Service Committee

**Chair - Yury T – Ukraine**

**Alternate - Pat D - Ireland**



# RECOVERY COMMITTEE

Chair: **Kornelija Z** Latvia

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Aliaksi Y - *Belarus*

Ján K – *Czech Republic*

Lotus A – *France*

Amanda S – *Great Britain*

Kornelija Z – *Latvia*

Ainas R - *Lithuania*

Brit A – *Norway*

Michał F - *Poland*

Fátima O - *Portugal*

Catalin I-M - *Romania*

Dmitriy T – *Russia*

Marek B – *Slovakia*

Jasna C-R – *Slovenia*

Christer M – *Sweden*

Toni H – *Switzerland (German)*

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

- I. Please share your experience about special groups for young people, women, men, sexual minorities, and other languages.

**Many countries have young peoples' meetings. It was felt that most young people have dual addictions and can sometimes be more attracted to Narcotics Anonymous.**

**Most specialist meetings take place in big cities.**

**It was felt that they were very enthusiastic.**

**Some countries have women's and men's meetings and some of those that don't have women's and men's meetings at conventions.**

**There are LGBT AA groups in very few countries.**

**Even though there are specialist groups they are still open to everyone within the fellowship.**

**In most countries there were other language meetings but very few of them belong to the structure within that country.**

**In some countries there are other language groups that belong to the country's structure.**

2. Share your experience regarding young people in AA and their role in service.

**It was felt that most young people attending meetings were enthusiastic and willing to take part in service.**

**The service that is being carried out by young people includes:**

- **Social media**
- **Internet**
- **Carrying the message to schools**

**They have also attended international conventions because of language skills.**

**In some countries they have a Young Peoples' Sub-committee which helps carry the message to the younger generation.**

3. How does one stay anonymous in the press, TV, radio, internet – concerning names, surnames, faces, or voices? Do the media respect the anonymity of AA members? What happens if an AA member speaks out publicly and breaks their anonymity?

**In most countries they respect our anonymity if they are informed about our principal of anonymity.**

**In some countries there are special committees that deal with press and the media.**

**In many countries we use alcoholic members who are journalists to explain about anonymity.**

**When talking to the media we try to have our faces blanked out and no surnames given. Sometimes our voices are recognised but only by people close to us.**

**In some countries celebrities talk about their recovery but do not mention AA directly.**

**Most countries have a breach of anonymity by individual members. They are then reminded of the traditions.**

4. Are there any non-alcoholic people within your country's AA structure and if so, what are their basic functions?

**Most have one or more non-alcoholic trustees, or friends of AA. They are mostly doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, priests, journalists and so on.**

**In most countries they are members of the board.**

**They are used as a face and voice to represent AA. They speak for us when we cannot speak for ourselves.**

**In some service offices there are non-alcoholic employees.**

**In a few countries it is felt that non-alcoholic trustees and friends of AA bring a balance to the AA structure especially when there is a conflict of opinion.**

**Most countries would like more non-alcoholic trustees and friends of AA within their structure.**

**In some countries they have non-alcoholic trustees/friends of AA but are not using them properly.**

5. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 20<sup>th</sup> ESM Recovery Committee.

**Chair - Lotus A – France**

**Alternate - Amanda S – Great Britain**

# UNITY COMMITTEE

Chair: **James O'B** Spain

Alternate: **Marjatta K** Finland

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Werner F – *Austria*

Walter Van den B – *Belgium (Flemish)*

Ivica S – *Croatia*

Jiří H – *Czech Republic*

Marjatta K - *Finland*

Jon Oli O - *Iceland*

Seamus B – *Ireland*

Aksels T – *Latvia*

Ivan C - *Malta*

Odd Einar V - *Norway*

Paweł W - *Poland*

Porfírio S - *Portugal*

Lubomir B – *Slovakia*

James O'B – *Spain*

Ewa B - *Sweden*

Anastasia R – *Switzerland (French)*

Fatma Nur I Z - *Turkey*

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

- I. How can we encourage group members to become more actively involved in their country's structure?

**The committee first spoke about why members are not actively involved in their country's structure.**

**Some of these reasons are:**

- a) They don't have a 'home' group.**
- b) They don't like the people in their country's structure.**
- c) They are unaware of their country's structure and there is an absence of service sponsors.**

**In order to solve these problems, suggestions were:**

- a) New members carry out relatively 'easy' service work – like putting away chairs, washing up, welcoming people at the door.**
- b) The 'people problem' was dealt with by study of the traditions and focussing on 'Principles before Personalities'. The group emphasised that working the traditions will lead to humility and more service work.**
- c) In a few of the groups, they had to 'threaten' the AA members by suggesting that if no-one did service work they would have to close the group. It was found that experienced AA members should lead by example and that this will lead to more service sponsors.**

2. What information should an AA website provide? Is there a link to other AA websites listing international AA activities?

**There are three main audiences:**

**a) The existing AA member looking for a group, or other relevant AA information.**

**b) The newcomer and/or a family member looking for information about AA and how it works.**

**c) The 'professional' (for example doctors, government officials, social workers) interested in how AA works for their clients.**

**The webpage should also include literature and online shopping for literature. Some countries include: Daily Reflections, AA events, online chat, personal stories and links to other AA international sites.**

**It was suggested that the web page should be attractive, easy to use and adaptable to modern technology.**

3. How do you deal with AA groups which are not part of the AA structure?

**There was confusion in the committee regarding the question 'AA groups which are not part of the AA structure'.**

**One group of the committee considered these as 'outlaw' groups (they call themselves AA groups but do not respect AA traditions). They deal with these groups by not listing them on AA websites or directories.**

**The second group in the committee considered these as AA groups who are not actively engaged in that country's structure. In dealing with these groups, they are visited by GSO or intergroup representatives and encouraged to participate in AA activities. Their meetings are listed and they are sent regular updates.**

4. How do groups deal with people from treatment centres attending AA meetings who do not understand AA principles?

**The committee found that this problem does not exist in many countries. In those countries where there are treatment centres, the problem can be when a large group of treatment centre patients overwhelm an AA group.**

**A solution seems to be to speak to the treatment centre staff, to explain the problem. In many groups AA members will speak with the treatment centre patients and explain how AA works.**

5. Suggest a theme for the 20<sup>th</sup> European Service Meeting.

**The theme for the 20<sup>th</sup> European Service Meeting will be 'An Unchanged Message in a Changing World'.**

6. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 20<sup>th</sup> ESM Unity Committee.

**Chair - Anastasia R – Switzerland (French)**

**Alternate - Ewa B - Sweden**

## WORKSHOP: PREPARING NEW PEOPLE FOR SERVICE

Chair: **Pawel W** Poland  
Alternate: **Brit A** Norway

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Werner F – *Austria*

Walter Van den B – *Belgium (Flemish)*

Iliana T - *Bulgaria*

Jiří H – *Czech Republic*

Amanda S – *Great Britain*

Eleftherios S - *Greece*

Dagur H - *Iceland*

Pat D - *Ireland*

Kornelija Z – *Latvia*

Ainas R - *Lithuania*

Brit A – *Norway*

Paweł W - *Poland*

Fátima O – *Portugal*

Lubomir B – *Slovakia*

Jose G – *Spain*

Yury T - *Ukraine*

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

- I. Share experience from your country on the theme “Preparing New People For Service”

**Each delegate briefly described the experience of service in their country, and their own personal experience of doing service.**

**The workshop agreed that the main points were:**

- a) **Doing service is part of individual recovery and is performed as an act of gratitude as well as an obligation resulting from AA traditions.**
- b) **It should also be fun and a pleasure to do.**
- c) **Many delegates highlighted their own experience of close personal relationship with a sponsor who encouraged them in to service. They were then able to pass this on to their own sponsee and help bring others into service.**
- d) **Lead by example.**
- e) **Many countries held regular service workshops to encourage participation.**
- f) **There is also a necessity to read service manuals and understand the Traditions and Concepts, raise awareness of the services.**
- g) **Improve the communication of information about the services. For example using the General Service Office to be a provider of information.**
- h) **Prepare to fill functions by keeping a ‘shadow’ in post so experience is preserved.**

- i) **Build confidence in people and don't be afraid to encourage people in to service positions.**
  - j) **Don't forget to be positive about the benefits of service.**
  - k) **Some participants said that people doing service should evolve at a pace to suit the individual, so they are not allowed to 'crash and burn' by taking on too much.**
  - l) **Pick the right time to do service.**
  - m) **Respect the principle of rotation.**
2. Select a theme for the 20<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop
- The theme selected was "How can we benefit from the experience of rotated Trusted Servants?"**
3. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 20<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop
- Chair - Walter Van den B – Belgium (Flemish)**
- Alternate - Iliana T - Bulgaria**



## WORKSHOP: SPONSORSHIP IN AA

Chair: **Marjatta K** Finland  
Alternate: **Brian J** Great Britain

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Aliaksi Y - *Belarus*

Ján K – *Czech Republic*

Marjatta K - *Finland*

Lotus A – *France*

Brian J – *Great Britain*

Aksels T – *Latvia*

Rimantas M - *Lithuania*

Ivan C - *Malta*

Odd E V - *Norway*

Porfírio S - *Portugal*

Catalin I-M - *Romania*

Dmitriy T – *Russia*

Marek B – *Slovakia*

Ewa B - *Sweden*

Toni H – *Switzerland (German)*

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

- I. Share experience from your country on the theme “Sponsorship in AA”

**The workshop committee discussed sponsorship and divided into the following groups:**

### **Person to Person**

**It was felt important to encourage the newcomer to have a same sex sponsor.**

**Some countries have lists of available sponsors.**

**Person to person sponsoring can have different channels of communication, for example Skype.**

### **Service Sponsoring**

**Many sponsors encourage the sponsee to get involved in service.**

**Service sponsoring can be Group to Group or Country to Country in the form of workshops on how to start groups, offer literature or by paying for delegate’s fees.**

**It was noted that sometimes it is hard to separate sponsoring from co-operation. Also the word ‘sponsoring’ has different connotations as in some languages sponsor is godmother or godfather.**

2. Select a theme for the 20<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop

**The theme selected was 'Back to Basics'.**

3. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 20<sup>th</sup> ESM Workshop

Chair - Porfirio S – *Portugal*

Alternate - Aksels T – *Latvia*

## **WORKSHOP: UNDERSTANDING OF PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES**

Chair: **Jasna C-R** Slovenia

Alternate: **Jürgen R** German Speaking Europe

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Johan R – *Belgium (Flemish)*

Ivica S - *Croatia*

Marko A – *Finland*

Jürgen R – *German Speaking Europe*

Jon Oli O - *Iceland*

Seamus B – *Ireland*

Rita M - *Italy*

Alan T – *Malta*

Magdalena O – *Netherlands*

Michał F - *Poland*

Valerii T – *Russia*

Jasna Č – *Slovenia*

James O'B – *Spain*

Christer M – *Sweden*

Anastasia R – *Switzerland (French)*

Fatma Nur I Z – *Turkey*

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 “Understanding of Principles Before Personalities”

**Many problems in AA come from personalities (ego), but real leaders are in a way important and useful to introduce the principles. They lead by example, they do not govern.**

**The importance of our work is always a discussion, hearing a voice from any member. It is very important to lead the newcomer who is the most important person in AA, and encourage other AA members to study in depth the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts.**

**Rotation and building gratitude for those who accept the service should be our direction.**

**The service in AA actually is a kind of pushing back our personalities and pushing forward our principles. AA literature is a primary source of AA principles**

2. Select a theme for the 20th ESM Workshop

**The theme selected was ‘Understanding and application of the 12 Concepts’.**

3. Elect a Chair and Alternate for the 20th ESM Workshop

**Chair - Fatma Nur I Z – Turkey**

**Alternate - Marko A – Finland**

# **Sharing Session & Closing Addresses**

## Sharing Session

### Presentations on the Theme: “Anonymity in Service”

#### Lou B (Slovakia)

Hello, my name is Lubomir and I am an alcoholic. It gives me great pleasure to be able to share my experience regarding Anonymity in Service. It is rather interesting that most of my last shares had something to do with service. Interesting because in the early years of my sobriety I did a fantastic job avoiding any kind of service. I was just not convinced that service could have anything to do with my sobriety. Just so you know I thought the same thing about the Big Book. It just made no sense to me. Today, it seems like service is all I am doing.

In the beginning anonymity for me was about no one knowing that I was going to AA. It gave me a sense of security. It was like a secret oath - we will not reveal our own identity or identity of others as members of AA. It is a promise of privacy which provides protection for all members from identification as alcoholics, especially important to newcomers. Being clever, which of course I was, this also meant that in case I came to a conclusion that I was not really an alcoholic - no one in public knew I was ever in AA.

I find that most people do not have a problem understanding anonymity at a personal level. It protects them and their families. I do my best to be guarding anonymity of others and I hope they are doing the same regarding mine.

In my area I work with many young AA members as part of my service - either through Big Book studies or direct sponsorship. As valuable as privacy is to these members, they cannot wait to share their recovery progress thorough AA with their families. Such a disclosure, however, is always their own choice: A.A. as a whole seeks to ensure that individual members stay as private and protected as they wish, or as open as they wish, about belonging to the Fellowship; BUT always with the understanding that anonymity at the level of the press, radio, TV, films and other media technologies such as the Internet is crucial to our continuing sobriety and growth — at both the personal and group levels.

In the beginning I was really worried about running into one of these newcomers in public and not knowing how to react. Especially when I would run into a female member of AA who would stop to say hi and followed up by a big hug. Now of course, my lovely wife standing right next me wants to know who on earth was this person. Do I break this member’s anonymity or do I sleep on the couch?

As I was getting more involved with general service work - I realized that special care must be given to guarding the anonymity of others. A simple email sent to AA members could be a breach of anonymity if by accident this email ended up being sent to people that are not AA members. It probably happens more often than not. I still get emails from AA service members where 30 other AA members are in the CC field with their full names. Unfortunately, sometimes non AA members are included in these email lists and this would be considered as a breach of anonymity. It is recommended we use BCC fields when emailing to multiple addresses. But I still have to rely on the person sending this email to actually do it. Instead I created a separate AA email account for myself without disclosing my full name. I would definitely not use my work email as some members do for AA communication as those could really end up in the wrong hands. Not only my anonymity is at risk but all of those who were included in the CC field. Why? Because many employers have access to your company emails and are regularly backed up on company servers for a long period of time.

As I continued my involvement in service I realized that it was probably a matter of time till my anonymity was compromised. On many occasions in order to be of service while dealing with public institutions we make this sacrifice and break our anonymity on a personal level.

Some of the General Service Board members are one of the examples - their names are publicly accessible as their names are required to be listed as statutory bodies for the AA legal structure. Some hospitals require that we disclose our full names when entering the hospital or an institution.

Couple of months ago I was asked if I'd be willing to come and do few informational meetings in one of our prisons. I thought why not, sounds interesting, I have never done anything like that. I would love to help. All of a sudden they are asking me for my full name, date of birth, tax id, my address in order for them to run a background check on me. Boy, I felt so violated by giving them all this personal information I was safeguarding so well until now. But I did it and who knows, I might be in some government database listed as an alcoholic now.

I remember asking one of our members why he would never join us for information meetings done in prisons. He told me he was afraid that someone would recognize him there as he put few of those inmates into prison. Good point, I thought. For my own safety, I don't want them to think that you and I are friends.

This incident where I had to provide all my personal information made me realize that it is OK to give up my privacy in a person to person level. It is serving a greater common good and it is not to gain personal recognition or serve my desires or ambitions.

Conference in 1998 decided and I quote: In today's society there is an ever-increasing requirement for security and personal identification. It is important that members of Alcoholics Anonymous remember that they are guests and co-operate fully. Members of the Fellowship visiting outside agencies should conform to their procedures remembering that each agency, whether prison, hospital, school or other, is autonomous. Notification of the arrangements made for visits or talks including, where appropriate, the sponsoring PI Officer, should provide the names of members attending to the host organization. The host may require personal identification, such as a letter from intergroup or region, passport, ID card, driving license or letter of invitation from the host.

Despite individual anonymity of members, it is important that Alcoholics Anonymous does not become invisible – some loss of anonymity is inherent especially in PI work. I avoided such PI work until I was OK with possible consequences from losing my anonymity.

One of our members told me that our Traditions are just suggestions and not to be taken too seriously. This same member and his sponsees see nothing wrong with breaking anonymity on a public level on certain occasions. I am not sure how they make this decision but I ask myself, why would anyone willingly give up their anonymity on a public level if not for his need to gain personal prestige or recognition for their service? It sure does not serve AA as a whole. What if this member starts drinking, public will associate this incident with AA.

If we break anonymity - others will recognize it and say, see AA does not work.

I was asked to participate in a local TV station documentary on recovering from alcoholism. We explained the producer the importance of our Tradition of anonymity on a public level. Notice it is not the media's responsibility to know about our traditions. They had no problems with it, I think they were fascinated that we did not want to become celebrities. Their TV crew came out to one of our locations, made sure that our faces were not visible and no names were mentioned. They did a great job with this documentary.

Many articles about recovering alcoholics were published in our local newspapers - they changed our names but our stories were left intact. We invited a journalist to sit in one of our meetings and she wrote a wonderful article about recovering in AA.

Whether or not to disclose our AA membership is up to the individual, remembering it is important not to violate Tradition Eleven. Saying publicly or in print, on television or anywhere else “I am an alcoholic” or “a recovering alcoholic” does not break an AA Tradition provided AA membership is not included in that statement. It is vital to remember never to reveal another member’s identity. We can advocate recovery and help others on a public level without ever breaking our anonymity.

But that does not mean that we cannot identify ourselves fully when dealing with the staff of newspapers, radio or TV stations. We are not a secret fellowship— those doing PI service work must be accessible by name and address to those with whom we wish to conduct our business. It looks really strange to give a TV producer or a doctor my business card with just my first name on it. He might think it is my stage name like Madonna or JZ.

I was told we cannot control people - they will do whatever they want to do. They will write a book about their recovery in AA and use their full name. I know of such cases because it happened in my region. They will appear in public and break their anonymity. We cannot stop it.

Upon learning that an A.A. member’s anonymity has been broken in the media, G.S.O. can communicate with this member and remind him or her of our Tradition of anonymity. My experience is that if you ask anyone in AA, there is very good chance they heard or read about the Tradition regarding anonymity. Yet, it seems like they do not fully understand this tradition.

AA taught me that we remain anonymous in public for two reasons:

- our promise of privacy to the still-suffering alcoholic and to the family
- a spiritual reason summed up in *Tradition Twelve* or in the word “humility”

Among other things, anonymity in the Fellowship means that we give up personal prestige for any A.A. work we do to help alcoholics. And, in the spirit of Tradition Twelve, it ever reminds us “to place principles before personalities.”

Anonymity stresses the equality in the Fellowship of all members by putting the brake on those who might otherwise exploit their A.A. affiliation to achieve recognition, power, or personal gain. We are a Fellowship of peers and we help others without expecting credit or reward.

I know that in life it feels good to be recognized for something well done. It feels good to be padded on the back and thanked once in a while. But then I realize that I already got paid for my work in ways I could not even imagine. First of all I am sober and well. Something I did not think was possible. To get here I just followed few simple instructions you gave me. I am not special in any way. Even though sometimes it sure feels like it.

While anonymity gave me a security blanket in the early days of sobriety, today it pushes me to do even more because I got a taste of the good life. I feel like this is just the beginning. If it already feels this good I can’t wait to have more of it. I no longer seek recognition from others. My mind told me I was never good enough anyways. That was a big problem in my previous life. I did not know any better. Experience and Traditions told me what to do, now it is up to me to safeguard them the best way I can. Lead by example and others might follow. One day at a time.

Thank you very much for listening and for all of your service. I know you helped me to become who I am today and for that I am grateful.

## **Fatima O (Portugal)**

Hello everyone.

My name is Fatima and I am an alcoholic from Portugal. My home group name is “Linguagem do Coração”, that is “Language of the Heart”, and we gather in Oeiras, near Lisbon.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to participate in the European Service Meeting and to share with you about “Anonymity in Service”.

I see anonymity has having 2 aspects: the confidentiality and the humility. These aim at my integrity, avoiding the destruction power of my arrogance and pride. As I understand, they protect me from the damaging part of myself.

My service in AA began some years ago, when I was 3 months sober and felt very anxious about everything. I heard that “service works”, so I offered to do service. The group assigned me coffee service. From that time until now, I’ve been doing AA service, tasks that my fellows have been given me, trusting before myself that I was able to complete them. These tasks made me sweat and shake. The fear of making a mistake was huge and I worked hard towards perfection.

When I was 6 months sober, with 2 other members, we opened a new AA group. They didn’t invite me but I saw it as an opportunity for growth and asked to go with them. I went and in no time, I began chairing some meetings and soon was assigned GSR. Again, sweat and shake. I studied hard, talked to my fellows, went to AA events, learned a lot and then had to face the criticisms of other members. Sometimes they confronted me with character defects that I couldn’t see. So, I had to slow down, think more, talk less, listen more and, of course, do my step work.

With 2 years, I was doing telephone answering service. Once per week, after my working hours, I went to the AA office to answer the phone. After the sponsorship phase, it was a lonely service as nobody was there. Our employee got out and I was alone. I remember being there, in the Winter, night time, me and the suffering persons and this was absolutely an overwhelming experience. Nobody knew who was on the phone, I was just a voice of hope. This service helped me a lot with my relationship with my Higher Power, with Trust and Gratitude.

One year later, I was appointed Conference Delegate and I learned that there is a long time to listen and a short time to speak, so I’d better think carefully what I want to say.

I did other service in my Area (Intergroup in UK) and in Board Committees and now I’m in the last year of Chairing the Board. In this service, I must deal with the national PI work. This and the service of the ESM and WSM Delegate give me a deep opening to the world. I learned to talk to doctors, important people from city councils, state agencies and businesses, media and my fellows from around the world.

I see all AA tasks and services as having equal importance because the aim of service is to keep AA members sober and allow them to grow. And the first thing service does for me is to take me away from my dramas and teach me to look beyond my belly.

Confidentiality happens through action, not claiming any service work I do, just doing the assignments and not promoting them. Humility is a consequence, possibly it will be given to me because of how I do.



Service led me from an inexperienced, trembling and insecure woman to a mature and realistic one. I can still shake and sweat here in front of you but now I know that even so, I can do this. I don't do service alone and that is good news. I always ask for help. I am not on the stage, not alone, not in contest, don't claim the service I do. I am one among others, in the circle, holding hands, one grateful recovering alcoholic by the grace of God.

Thank you for listening.

## David Rosen – Publications Director, GSO USA/Canada

My name's David and I'm an alcoholic. Just a little recap on our process and policy for translations & licensing. As you know this weekend there's been so much energy and good feeling about us sharing the message in so many languages around the world. Our task at AA World Services, and the publishing department in particular, is to administer the licensing and translation, to shepherd it through a process that will ensure the integrity of the original English message our profound deep message of hope, that our spiritual message is preserved, is shared and is intact in all of our translations. As we all know with my discussions with folks this weekend it bears out, here are some comments that I heard; 'wow it was harder than we thought!' Wow, if we think there's words missing in our committee meetings and in our coming together today imagine the literature and translation committees work, it can be painstaking. And painstaking in this way becomes a good thing. When you think it's done it may not be done. We of course follow our traditions and concepts in all of our work which call for our group conscience to be making these decisions.

A translation committee can consist of even as few as three people. With two, we know that two alcoholics in a room can be a meeting, a group. Our experience shows that with two folks on a committee it can get dicey! Three you can break a tie and move things forward. I've heard stories where groups are getting together around the world and sometimes they're called literature or translation or workgroups and these groups could be as few as three folks who get together consistently. So something about consistency over time requires a commitment and it is always surprising to folks how long it can take. We heard yesterday about the Twi translation in Ghana, nine years, three women, completed.

Here's another story. Recently, a little bit over a year ago, maybe a year and a half ago, Mary Cumings and I were in the office and, as will happen, we get phone calls and we get visitors, we get cards we get letters, we get emails. You never know when there will be an email that pops up, when there will be a phone call, when there will be folks visiting the office and everyone is welcomed. We call the office 'your office'. It's always open. Folks can come by and tour the office. We heard that there were two fellows from Jerusalem coming from Israel to visit us. We had met with some folks who were working on re-translations in Hebrew for the big book and other material in Israel at the 2015 convention in Atlanta, a group of folks from Jerusalem. It was classic AA as I like to call it. There was a rabbi, there were Jews and Christians, there were about six fellows and from maybe seventy years old down to a newcomer who was probably twenty one years old and he was only in AA about two months. He had a good sponsor and a service sponsor already who insisted that he come. So these fellows come by and the newcomer is just aghast, he just cannot believe he's in the middle of fifty seven thousand alcoholics in a convention centre and he's learning wide eyed how it works. So I meet with them and we start talking about all kinds, and this is how we approach translation and licensing, we ask folks 'what are you focussed on in your fellowship? Recovery, service, history?' It helps if folks prioritise and as we know from a lot of very active translation committees, a few come to mind; Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, everyone wants everything! We know we want everything at once but we like to prioritise. Let's start with three, pick three, pick five and we set up phase one, phase two, phase three. So we are talking about that with the folks in Atlanta. That was 2015 on the 4<sup>th</sup> July weekend.

So about a year and a half ago Mary and I get a call that two fellows from Jerusalem are here and they said "David we met with you in Atlanta! We have news and we want to follow up on some of our translations". So we meet with them, drop everything and meet with them, it was wonderful. It was like a homecoming, you know. We make so many friends in AA, we are bonded. We sat down in Mary's office and Mary says "while I have you here, I have a question. We are getting some emails from AA members in the West Bank and we're wondering do you ever have contact through AA with folks in the West Bank? Are there meetings? Can we keep up with AA that's happening there?" Well these two men look at each other, and say "Hmm, well? Not really. Oh do you mean in our meetings in Jerusalem?" We say yes.

“Well you know the wall it doesn’t really keep people out or in, and you know Jews and Christians and Muslims, with the way things are, there’s intermarriage, there’s families, these folks they find a way. People find a way to go back and forth. So what’s happening in our meetings, we will have folks arrive who may be newcomers, or who are in Jerusalem, and it’s happening more and more. So we have a meeting where we have the big book in English for ex patriots and other who speak English, tourists and so on. We have the big book in Hebrew and more and more someone will drop in and say I’m an alcoholic and I read Arabic”. They were feeling bad about not having the big books available for these folks so they started ordering the re-translation of the big book in Arabic, which is only a few years old, maybe four, five years old, which was accomplished with the help of MERCAA, the Middle Eastern AA. So now that’s available in paperback and they’re ordering it from us so that they can have, in Jerusalem, the big book for Jews, Christians and Muslims available in their meetings. In Jerusalem all three faiths are together helping each other stay sober, get sober. Where is peace happening in the Middle East? In AA meetings, in Jerusalem.

So I’d like to express my deep gratitude for everyone here helping us to share this message. I’ve met with so many of you. Folks who would like to contact us through email from your general service offices or literature committees I do have cards available of our working email address and also for orders of books and pamphlets there is also a contact person.

One bit of learning we’ve been, over the years, really firming up in our minds that is when folks want to undertake a translation of the big book it can, as we know, take years and years. We start with chapter five which has the twelve steps. Were learning that perhaps the translation committees can start with pamphlets to get their feet wet, to get into the groove of group conscience decision making and so any of the recovery pamphlets may be a good starting point. The Twelve Steps Illustrated, perhaps, Is AA for Me? Questions & Answers on Sponsorship, Frequently Asked Questions. These are some of our best selling pamphlets. Many Paths to Spirituality, rather new, is also becoming very popular. So folks could start with that.

Recently we’ve been having great success with once you have the steps translated they could be made available through our pamphlet which is called ‘How it Works’ and it’s excerpted from chapter five. It’s only the front and back of a two sided sheet and this is particularly helpful for all the new dialects, there are many, many dialects of languages not spoken by large numbers of people. Recently at the Meeting of the Americas in Costa Rica we learned of hundreds of AA members in remote areas of Nicaragua who are gathering and they don’t speak Spanish or English they speak a language called Miskito. So I asked are there folks who are bilingual? “Yes! Oh there’s a professor available too and they’re in AA.” Can you form a committee? “Yes!” Can you start to translate the twelve steps? “We’d like to.” So that was accomplished at the meeting, a request for translation of the How it Works pamphlet. One step at a time, one good action after another, that’s how we do it and I am so grateful. Thank you so much.

## Closing Addresses

### Dagur H (Iceland)

Hello everyone my name is Dagur and I am an alcoholic.

What a privilege to be here, I am very grateful. I want to start by thanking all of you. Sophie, Jenny, Roger and the GSO. Mary and David for coming over and of course Michal for his work, and all of you who made this possible. You at the back, I don't know your name, in the corner, but thank you so much!

I didn't use to be like that, being thankful for the things that came my way. I took it for granted and that's just the way I was. Even when people asked me about my family, about my younger sisters and what they were doing I couldn't answer that because I was so occupied with myself. It says somewhere that alcoholism is a self centred illness and so true it is with me. I didn't understand that until I came to you and found out that I'm a real alcoholic and I have this illness, or sickness if you will. I can't drink, it's just me. If I start I can't stop, I don't know where I end up. Even if I want to with all my fibres in my body to stop, I can't, I don't have the willpower and I don't have the power myself.

A little funny story came to my mind when I sat there when Michal approached me and asked me to come up here and speak. Many years ago I was still drinking and I went to a fortune teller and she totally knew everything about my life. How many sisters and brothers I had, where I lived and I thought she must have looked me up or something. She said "I see here you have your life ahead of you, you will have a good life and you will be a part of a big worldwide organisation". And I thought of Greenpeace! That was just something in my mind at that time, I thought I will be a big shot in Greenpeace, something like that.

And here I am before you. I'm just so grateful I discovered you and that I put my hands up and asked for help back in 1994. I didn't work the steps the first years and what a difference it is to give yourself to this programme and to work the steps. I thought because I had not been drinking for some years that everybody had forgotten and that I didn't need to do all the steps. But boy did I not know! I remember finishing the fifth step with my sponsor and this clarity came to my mind, and a silence I hadn't had for many, many years. I try as best as I can in service and to give it to other alcoholics in need.

On my first meeting when I came to AA from rehab and an old timer came up to me, put a brush in my hand and said "you wash up". That's how they did it back then. They said "you come here early and you talk to us old guys and you finish the dishes". That was just natural for me. As years passed and my life got better and I got all the things back I got a bit lazy. I'm so grateful I came back here and for the life I have been given.

I live an adventurous life today. I have a beautiful family, beautiful healthy kids and wife, and even a former wife who is a good friend of mine and that's just how my life is today and its all thanks to you guys. To AA. To a God of my understanding.

I think I will leave it at that, I don't want to keep you too long. Just to say I am thankful for this time with you and I wish you all the best also, the new chairman and the people for the next ESM. Thank you.

## **Brit A (Norway)**

My name is Brit and I'm an alcoholic, and I'm sober today by the grace of my higher power, which I call God. I also want to express my thanks to the GSO office here in York, to Sophie and all the mail she's been sending us. To Jenny, Steve and Roger and to Mary and David for coming all the way from New York. Lots of my friends think I am in New York actually when I say I am in York, but it doesn't matter! Michal thank you for the great job you have been doing.

I think I will try to share with you my thoughts during the weekend, well not during the weekend for the time being actually. I am sort of struggling with the problem of finding my right size. Not being too small and not being too big. To find a balance where I am comfortable. The most important thing for me to achieve that is never forget how my life was before I reached rock bottom. I pray that I will never forget the desperation I felt when asking for help. Never forget my first AA meeting and how I was welcomed, the smile and how that surrendered me, made me feel ok. And never forget when it changed. When my higher power, my God, became present in my life and when I started to believe, when the miracles started to happen more often and it was not just a bit of luck. When my prayers were heard and things started to happen to me.

And when others believed in me when I was asked to help out and to do AA service for the first time. Someone trusted me, that I would come back next week. When I started to trust in myself, that I could make plans. I remember one of my best girlfriends had her baby coming from China and she asked me to be a godmother. I'd just been sober for a few months and she believed in me. And my family and my friends, my youngest son it took him six years to believe in me. They told me it would take three, it took six. Later on I have understood that he could not be disappointed once more. His love for me was so strong so he had to protect himself, which I understood much, much later. I thought it was just him being stubborn.

I hope and I pray that I will never forget when I did my fifth step with my sponsor, and how I felt afterwards. I was flying out of that room. My rucksack was put down. I hope I will never forget the eyes of my first sponsee when she came to me, and how it changed during those first months. I hope I will never forget that I could help someone to feel the way I have felt and to see that there was a hope.

I certainly pray that I will never forget what AA has given me because that's part of who I am today. The Steps, the Traditions, the Concepts, my friends in my home group, my region, my country, here in Europe and also the world. I met so many people that I will never, never forget and you will be part of me in my heart.

So I think I will leave it there and words are just words but you'll all be with me in my heart and I wish you all the best and safe journey home.

Thank you.

## Jiří H (Czech Republic)

Hello, my name is Jiřka and I'm an alcoholic from the Czech Republic. I'm very grateful to be here and a grateful alcoholic. I am happy to see here a lot of new women's faces. For me it is very important because I am a member of the LGBT community so I see the world from a little bit different perspective than normally men see it and for me women in service are very important, so this is very good and I am happy for it.

Also we took some promise to our country last year that we will bring a woman to this service as a delegate here but the first of them got pregnant, the alternate got pregnant and also Michal's wife got pregnant. So as you can see Czech AA is going very well! But please believe me outside of the thirteenth step! It's very healthy, I would say getting better, and I'm happy for it and I am happy that we have a first term delegate Jan. What I wanted to say is that for me it is important to have a woman here but sometimes things happen differently that we would wish. We cannot control everything.

I am here thanks to Michal and I am very proud of him that he is in charge of this role and service. I met him three years ago. He brought me to SCANCYPAA, the Scandinavian young people in AA convention and I fell in love with conventions. He talked about conference, the Czech AA conference, and I hadn't a clue what does it mean? I went there and because we are a very small country and small fellowship, even I had only one and a half years of my sobriety, I was elected to the literature committee and as a delegate. I went here two years ago when I had something like two and a half years of my sobriety and it wasn't easy for me because I was so fearful and full of resentment, not only here but also during my work in the literature committee, because I am an alcoholic. I can see I have learned how to work with people, to socialize with people through the work and the service. So I recommend to other people in our country if you want to deal with your fears and remove them go do the service and you will see that you can work on it, because I have to work with other people, I have to face my fears.

This illness it's a social illness. I have also an opportunity to recover when I see myself in the mirror of other people, if you understand me. So it helped me a lot and when I compared myself to two years ago I can see the progress in recovery and I am very happy for it. So for me it is a great opportunity and I am very grateful for it.

Regarding principles before personalities; I am a very extroverted person so the first thing which I did when I came to this meeting room I tried to make a selfie with this great screen. It's just like don't take things so seriously! Of course I am not going to share these pictures on Facebook even if in the past I would like to do it "look at where I am, small boy from the Czech Republic in the European something" you know. Really I wished to be the most famous in the world because I was small and now I am in the European conference and I don't think of it like my achievement. I pray each morning to God – please help me as your tool as you need it and I pray to understand his will. This helps me to be not attached to the results of my work and I think also the service for my country is like this. I am a member of the board of trustees, I work as a delegate, I am in the literature committee, because we are a small country! But I try not to attach to the work. I try to just listen to my inner voice, to what I should do. I try to do my best and not to be attached to it.

I really liked the share of David when he mentioned that in Jerusalem Alcoholics Anonymous connected three different religions. I hope that also Alcoholics Anonymous will connect two different Russian structures. I think that it is just part of the evolution but I cannot imagine what will happen if everyone has two or more structures here. But I think it has happened because we are alcoholics and that's just a lesson learned.

I'm so grateful to be here, part of this amazing fellowship. Somebody mentioned today collaboration or co-operation. I like the words 'fellow travellers' because all of us are fellow travellers to each other and we can learn from each other, I really like it, or buddies, it's also good. I'm so grateful to be here, it's amazing and I would like to invite you to our twenty second Czech AA convention which will be held from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> June in the Czech Republic, all of you are invited. We will try and find a translator if needed, so you are invited to our convention.

The second thing which I would like to mention is that I am a very enthusiastic member of a young people's AA convention because I really like them, because they are full of energy and crazy stuff but also work on steps and have a lot of workshops. For me, for my kind of personality it's very good, I like it. The last one was in Helsinki and it was amazing and the other one will be moved to the Eastern part of Europe to Lithuania, Vilnius. I am very proud of it because we would like to involve more people from Eastern Europe so you are also all invited and it is from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> July in Vilnius, Lithuania. I think that the flyers are on the table and don't forget it's just like young people in our hearts. It's not a different AA it is the same AA, it's just concepts from youngsters, how to engage with other young people. So that's what I wanted to mention here also because sometimes I miss that we don't speak about young people conventions so much because they are amazing and they are a very, very big part of AA.

That's all from me and thank you so much again and I really wish you to enjoy yourselves at this convention and other conventions. I wish Rita to be successful next European Service Meeting. Thank you so much.

## Jatta K (Finland)

Hello all, I'm still Jatta an alcoholic from Finland and I have lots and lots of notes with me and I am happy that Michal asked me this morning to speak to you because otherwise I would have spent the whole night awake! You know planning what I'm going to say to you, because I want to say it all!

First of all I want to thank the speakers prior to me; Dagur, Brit, my favourite boy Jiřka for walking with me all these four years, it has been a great laugh, a great trip. I am delighted today that there are so many first term delegates, so eager to be in service, so eager to be here and I am just waiting for what our fellowship can be after you put your effort in the next coming years.

I'm an alcoholic full of resentment, still after almost twenty years of sobriety. One very clear moment was when I went for the first time to a World Service Meeting in Warsaw. I had been sponsored by the previous World Service Delegate for Finland and they kept on saying how nice it is, "you hug them all and they love you and it is something you have never experienced before" and so I went to Warsaw waiting to be hugged. When I was there I saw people hugging each other, people knowing each other and I felt a bit alone because I didn't know so many people at that point. I felt resentment, yes, because I'm an alcoholic. But then during the week the situation changed – I got new friends, I am fully accepted as I am, I wasn't afraid to speak with my broken English because I knew that people would want to understand me and that is the most important thing.

After Warsaw I had the privilege to visit very many countries and wherever I did go I met my new friends, delegates, and I'm never afraid of going to an AA meeting wherever, even though I don't know the language, because I can always share with my own language. Then when I came to York I was the one hugging everybody, being so pleased and thankful and why I am telling this is that is very important how we meet people and here in York I think, and I hope, that everybody has been met warmly and accepted.

So service, I did service in Finland at some level but being the World Service/European Service Delegate has been a great experience because I've learned so much about AA and how important it is to pass on what you have got. It is important. So I am so grateful, I am happy, I have been privileged to be here serving my country, serving you somehow.

This program has been very helpful, not only with my problem with alcohol it has helped me to get over some struggles and sorrows I have met and I have noticed I can use this program almost anytime, anywhere. And of course it is sad to leave but that's the way it should be because in the case there was no rotation I would be here forever. Of course I don't want to say goodbye to you but I hope I will see many of you in different places, for example in Detroit on the next big anniversary, that will be a great celebration again.

I need to leave before the closing address and as I cannot possibly go through hugging each and every one here take this as a universal hug saying how grateful I am and I am wishing you all the best and I am trusting Marco will say the serenity prayer in Finnish. I'm going to do that on the train in the language of the heart.

Thank you, thank you so much, all of you.



## Michal S (Czech Republic) – Chair of the 19<sup>th</sup> ESM

Thank you, thank you to the speakers and everybody for being here. We are getting there, it will soon be the end and now it is my turn to say goodbye, I am probably more nervous than I was at the opening! So let's see how that will go. First I would like to thank as well everybody in York, in the office all the staff and everybody who is just doing such great work here so we can be here and have everything we need and just focus on the work, you know the important part so we can share experience and take something back home to help the still suffering alcoholics, I think that is the most important. So thank you, thank you for doing that for us and thanks to our friends from the United States and Canada service structure, they always come here and share their experience and everything about AA with us and we are really united on those fronts.

Even before I was coming here knowing that I am the chair it means that I have the privilege to experience three European Service Meetings. I couldn't get rid of that feeling somewhere back in my head that this is the end. You know the end of the line, I am done! I've done everything I could ever. I think it was that alcoholic, that pessimistic part which is part of the illness and is still inside me, because before I got sober I was always like that in my head. Everything was dark, everything was just you know, I couldn't enjoy nothing. This is different because I know it's not true, it's just that thought. It is not like that. What is the truth is that I probably won't see some of you, probably many of you I won't see but I don't have to be sad. I don't think it's really a sad thing because I know that you are there. I know that there are so many people eager and willing to work and to pass the message and just try to help still suffering alcoholics, just try to do something for our primary purpose, and that's amazing. I know in all these countries all over the world we have fellowships and people trying to do just that and that we can share about it here and you will go back home and continue with that work. I think that's amazing and that's what makes me calm and really confident that if there is someone still stumbling and needing help, and yesterday I heard a lot of them on the streets, that we are ready and if we can reach out we will and if they reach out back that we will get them and can help them. So I am really grateful for that.

I was thinking about the rotation and our founders because that's what they did. They were there, they started all this and they had to pass it on, they had to rotate out and just trust the others, you know the new ones, the next generation, to continue with it and it's been going for such a long time. Although my sickness, or my illness, might sometimes tell me that without me it won't work I have such a huge evidence that it's not true, it will work, it will carry on because there are so many others willing to do just that and that's really important for me. The spirit of rotation, I think it taught me as much as the service itself because that was the hardest thing for me to do. Not to start something, not to do the work but to leave it and to have a good feeling about it. Just really experience the trust that it will go as it should, it will continue as it should. I experienced it really a lot of times and I am grateful for those opportunities because I am not even ten years sober, I am nine years sober and I've got through pretty much everything which is possible in AA. I think that that is something unusual and I'm just happy that it was possible for me. We started a lot of AA groups because that was what felt very natural for me because there was not enough groups, so what should be do? Not just wait and they will, you know, somehow pop up. We can just set them up and just be there and just get people so we have more meetings, more groups. More cities with AA present so it can help.

We started with a national magazine because other countries had it and we don't, we didn't, so why not start with that? There were five years of constant asking for stories, for experiences and everything and it was like at every event I had to get up and just say "please give us your stories, give us your experiences" and then work with that and work with other people so we can have the magazine and it still goes on, it's almost ten years. I don't have to be there, I can contribute but it goes on.

That is when we were starting our structure and starting our board of trustees, I was one of the first. We didn't do much because we didn't know what to do and now the board has totally different issues and decisions to make and I'm really grateful that they are doing such a great job and that I can somehow support them or tell them just thank you because it's really important. So this is just another step for me that I will leave and I will continue with whatever I can because there is so much to do in AA, it just doesn't have to have such a fancy name as a chairman or chairperson or whatever. It's just the work that keeps me sober and which helped me to be also happy and enjoy the sobriety because that's really important for me.

What I realized from some shares and what is really important, we were talking about it, is that we have traditions, we have concepts and for the service, at least that's how I understand it. For the right work of AA, we need to respect that and follow that. I tried it on my personal level but I wasn't able to do it the right way or the best possible way until I really went to my own program, to the steps. When I think about some discord or issues or, you know, some arguments and whatever in AA, in the structures, in this I cannot help, at least now in this moment, to feel that it because there are the personalities over principles. That they have not respected the traditions and the concepts and that will only be because there are sick people. I was a sick person and I can easily become a sick person again because if I don't work my program, it's not permanent I need to do it continuously so it won't happen again because the illness is there. I think that is what I feel now, that if I don't work the steps I cannot really follow the traditions and the concepts and I am afraid that is true in many structures even, or other issues. That's just what I am asking from here, that we can talk as much about traditions and concepts but if there is no step work I don't feel, I don't think that it can really go through. That's just one of the notes I have taken from here.

One of my goals as a chair I think over this weekend was to make you all feel comfortable and that, as I learned, is an impossible task because there is always something you may not like and I can just wish that if there was something that you would tell us. That you would step up and there were people that spoke up and I am grateful for that because we cannot know that, it's hard to know everything and expect everything so please just don't be afraid. What I learned in my very first European Service Meeting and this forum was that ok it is still AA. Nothing changed. I don't know these people but I didn't know people at my first meeting, and this is still AA. So I can trust, I can feel safe, and I can say what I need to say. I hope that would be the common feeling, not that you are all happy and comfortable and everything is as you wish but that you feel safe enough to say so if not. So that's what I would really like and wish, that we achieve that. What also amazed me over this weekend is that there were so many tears from the shares, from what we heard and experienced but there was also a lot of laughs, we laughed a lot. It was a lot of fun. During the sessions and in between I always seen and heard mostly, some people in particular, laugh out loud and just having fun and that's important. Also important for me personally because I wasn't like that, like I said I was always in the dark and too sad and too depressed for tears and laughs were not even possible so this is like a cure for me as well, that I can have that in my life and enjoy it.

And what is the most powerful feeling I will take from here? I supposed I will be hangovered like I was after many conventions and everything because this is like a different world and then I have to go back to the real one and the shock sometimes is really powerful. I have some sort of hangover which is only reminding me that yes, this is great! I want that, I want to go back and I want to stay close to it. But what I will really take out from here is a very strong feeling of gratitude. I don't know how else, and what else to say about it. I'm just so grateful that I can be here. I was going to my wife, she was telling me the twins are kicking and everything is fine and they are saying hello, I was very happy for that. She told me she is proud that I am here, that she has a husband like that, that I can do the work and be somehow useful, because that's what I want to be. In my whole life, in all aspects of my life I want to be useful and stay like that so this was only another opportunity that I was trying to use for that. I don't know what else to say, it's just because the gratitude I was sharing about at it at a lot of meetings and I could never really express it, what it means, and I like that in AA we have the expression 'gratitude in action'.

That I think is really the only way to express what I really feel. To just pass it on and do some more and be there, be available. So I have already scheduled calls with my sponsees because I wasn't available during this weekend and yes, I have a lot of things to do! So I am grateful for that and I wish you just the same things we experienced here, that they can continue so you can just extend all that and just share these experiences because that I think is one of the most difficult parts about this service, being a delegate, how to share it with my fellowship. How to describe what's really happening here. So whatever way you find, whatever way you have to do that please do because this is amazing and I think everyone should know about it. We should be all aware that we are part of it because we are. We are here because of our fellows from the fellowship, everybody.

So thanks for that as well. I'm starting to be really moved and I'm going to cry so I will cry later on! So I will finish and the last thing we have is the serenity prayer so I am looking forward to that and I think we will have some questions. So thank you all for being here and for supporting me, I heard a lot of kind words from you so thank you for that. Thank you.