

European Committee (EC) Annual Report (2016) For the 2017 ACA WSO Annual Business Conference

Inception Date: May 2013

Sunset Date: Perpetual

Committee Members:

Majbrit M., Denmark, Chair, and Member of the WSO Board of Trustees eu@acawso.com

Jeffrey F., Czech Republic, Chair of Finance and Literature Subcommittees, and Member of the WSO Board of Trustees eu-finance@acawso.com

Website / Repository URL of meeting minutes / reports:

<http://repository.adultchildren.org/europe-connection>

www.acawsoec.com

<http://acawsoec.com/meetings/monthly-teleconference-calls/>

I. Statement of Purpose

Official: Our mission is to be the human face and local (on the ground and not foreign) presence in Europe of the World Service Organization (WSO) for the Fellowship of Adult Children of Alcoholics / Dysfunctional Families (ACA). From a place of unconditional love, we pro-actively carry the message of the 12 Steps, by supporting the growth of the European Fellowship through a wide range of services that help build their own local service structures, facilitate the translation / verification / local printing and distribution of ACA literature in their own language, understand our concepts of service, traditions, and the structure of the WSO. We are not organized for the private gain of any person, and function as an autonomous body for Europe, as part of the WSO.

Unofficial: We are the “Mighty Mouse” of the WSO. We are only two committee members with very limited support, but we each speak three languages and do our best to serve a diverse and divided continent with more than 700 million people in 50 countries and 23 official languages. Fellowships in these countries, tend to be much smaller and/or underdeveloped compared to the US, because of the need to first interpret the word before it can be spread. As a result, much of our time is spent nurturing the often-fragile development of local translations and service structures, that have to replicate the ACA wheel (meetings, service structure and local literature) in their own language and by themselves. Despite these overwhelming odds, we do make a difference every day, but miracles take a bit longer.

II. Bullet list of committee activities in 2016

1) Raised the profile considerably of the EC with increased monthly communications...

which now include: an email newsletter, a teleconference call with local dial-in numbers for Europe, followed by a recording of that call posted on our new EC website (www.acawsoec.com) and eventually minutes of the call posted on the WSO repository and the EC site.

2) Researched local book printing in England and selling books on Amazon.co.uk...

which lead to the green light being given by the WSO Chair in early 2016 to begin shipping books in bulk to England and selling Europe-wide through Amazon fulfillment. This is especially important for the development of the English-speaking fellowship in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland.

3) Spoke at a well-organized business meeting in Latvia...

and shared about the structure of the WSO, how we work, and how our work is guided by our traditions and funded by sales of literature.

4) Researched and found alternative shippers (like TNT)...

who could deliver bulk orders of our books outside the US at a much lower cost than the US postal system, who's charges typically made up 2/3 the cost, of any foreign-shipped purchase.

5) Set up a system to spot-check-verify translations of ACA books...

using more affordable local resources instead of large US translation agencies. It is estimated that this new approach has saved the WSO about \$20,000 in 2016.

6) The WSO, through the EC, made its first official visit to The Netherlands...

to get to know their fellowship, leading members of their service structure, and speak about the need of having a service structure in place here in Europe and how we make this happen.

7) Originated and drafted a Board approved commercially viable pricing policy...

for the WSO and local fellowships for producing/distributing foreign ACA books outside the US. This ends uncertain margins or losses on foreign titles printed in the US and enables fellowships outside the US to be able to afford to purchase our literature under their own financial conditions.

8) Suggested that the WSO Treasurer use a foreign payment intermediary...

(TransferWise) so that Board members in Europe (and others outside the US receiving payments from the WSO) would not have to incur additional bank charges. The WSO also saves money with transfer fees and exchange rates.

9) Introduced the ability to provide business and commercial advice...

to support local service structures in Europe relating to their local literature sales and distribution.

10) Continued to grow private telephone and Skype support calls...

with various calls weekly, sometimes twice a week, with key service members in countries seeking advice and best practices when setting up service structures in their own country.

11) Originated and drafted a Board approved per diem travel policy...

for Board members to further simplify WSO accounting records and admin. This was driven by the challenges experienced in Europe with multiple currencies, payment methods, or lack of US-style cash register receipts in some countries.

12) Originated and drafted a Board approved policy to allow all trifolds...

to be downloaded for free in pdf format. This mainly benefits fellowships outside the US because they can now print them as needed at local costs and without having to pay for overseas shipping. Smaller groups in the US with less financial means also benefit from this policy. The policy also included asking anyone downloading free trifolds to consider making a one-time 7th Tradition contribution of \$10 or more as a token of appreciation.

13) Sought legal counsel which approved a contractual arrangement...

for the WSO to hire a company in Europe to act as an intermediary when paying expenses for committees operating outside the US. This greatly simplifies accounting records for the WSO saving time and money.

14) Sent ACA Starter Kits...

to Malta, Switzerland and Romania as part of the "Lights On" initiative.

15) The WSO, through the EC, made its first official visit to Hungary...

to get to know their fellowship, leading members of their service structure, and speak about the WSO. This official WSO visit was also the catalyst to bring together members face-to-face to discuss their local translation challenges with the aid of having immediate advice from the WSO.

16) The WSO, through the EC, made its first official visit to Russia...

to attend the 3rd Annual European Meeting and get to know their fellowship, leading members of their service structure, and speak about the WSO. Prior to this visit extensive talks were also conducted on the phone regarding their service structure. This official WSO visit was also the catalyst to bring together members from all across Russia for their first face-to-face business meeting to discuss regional cooperation. The EC also created and brought with them as a gift, a coin to commemorate the publishing of the Big Red Book (BRB) in Russian. Personal copies of the BRB that EC members brought with them were also passed around to members to hold and cradle, many of whom never held a copy in their hands.

17) The WSO, through the EC, made its first official visit to Italy...

to get to know their fellowship, leading members of their service structure, and speak about the WSO. This official WSO visit was also the catalyst to get a national Italian Intergroup formed. Talking about our traditions and concepts of service made a huge difference in how they set themselves up and how they elected trustees. We also talked about copyrights and explained why it is important.

18) Began to address a serious copyright violation with our literature in Germany...

that was years in the making. This progress was due to the development of a local service structure in Germany and the on-the ground support of EC Committee/Board members who could also communicate in German.

III. Tasks Completed in 2016

- 1) Created our first plan and budget (for 2016) which was approved by the Board.
- 2) Upgraded our monthly Skype call to a free teleconference line with local numbers in Europe so that more people could easily join our call or listen to a recording of it.
- 3) Began to write and send a monthly email/newsletter with updates and announcements relevant to the EC's work and the fellowship in Europe.
- 4) Created a simple website (www.acawsoec.com) to begin communicating and connecting more efficiently with the European fellowship.
- 5) Appointed EC Country Representatives in 16 countries: Czech Republic, Denmark, England and Wales, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.
- 6) Attended the 3rd annual ACA European Meeting that was held in Moscow.
- 7) Sent an EC member to national events in Latvia, Netherlands, Denmark, Hungary, Russia, Czech Republic, and Italy.
- 8) Laid the groundwork to solve two major literature problems in Europe: selling English language literature from Amazon UK and printing local language literature in Europe.
- 9) Hired support to transcribe monthly TC minutes and upload content on the EC website.
- 10) Continued to support the fellowship's needs on a case-by-case basis per country.

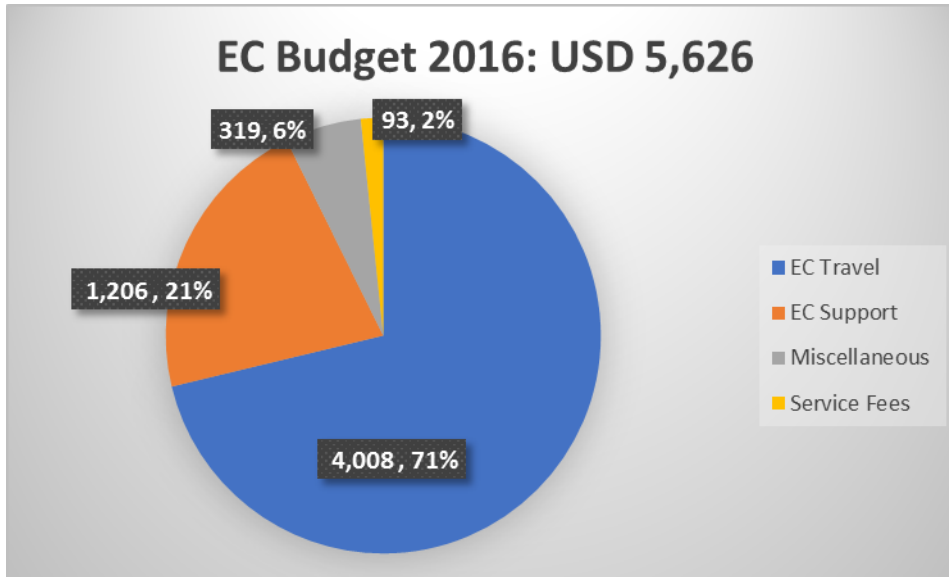
IV. Finances

As already stated, the European Committee is unique in that it needs to support fellowships in many foreign countries that need to replicate much of what the WSO has already done in the US. For this reason, funding and finances plays a more important role for this committee, which is why we include a section on it for our report.

1) 2016 Budget

In 2016 the EC spent USD 5,626 which as the chart shows, the bulk of it was for **Travel** (71%) where at least one Committee/Board member travelled to attend and speak at national events in Latvia, The Netherlands, Hungary, and Italy. Both Committee/Board members also travelled to attend and speak at the 3rd European Meeting that was held in Moscow, Russia. On average this was

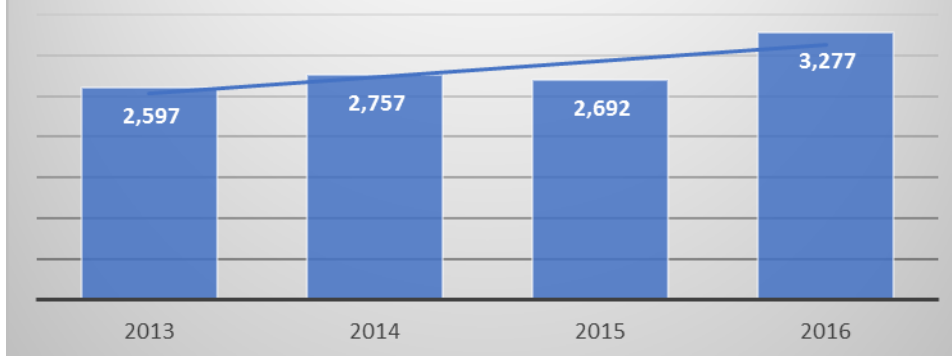
a total cost of about USD 660 per person per country visited. **Support** is the second largest expense (21%) which accounts for mainly administrative support such as transcribing our monthly teleconference calls and all expenses associated with our web site. **Miscellaneous** (6%) are one-off expenses and **Service Fees** (2%) cover the cost of transferring funds and payments in Europe.



2) 2016 7th Tradition Contributions

In 2016 the EC reversed the decline in 7th Tradition Contributions from Europe with an increase of nearly 22% on 2015. This was achieved by being much more visible and pro-actively engaging member contacts to get involved. Profile building and outreach efforts were covered in the activities portion of this report. But special mention needs to be made regarding the creation of Country Representatives, which is an advisory position to the EC, and helps keep us informed of developments in their country. However, we are only scratching the surface, as there needs to be a major educational initiative on this topic which will begin in 2017. The other major challenge regarding 7th Tradition contributions has been the high cost of obtaining ACA literature from the US. Again, in 2017, these issues will finally begin being addressed in Europe by selling literature on Amazon (in Europe) and printing literature in Europe.

7th Tradition Contributions (Europe) USD 11,323 from 2013-2016



3) 2016 Literature Sales

ACA Literature (in English and foreign languages) continues to be an important component of the recovery process for adult children in Europe. Unfortunately, no easy system has ever been set up with WSO financial records, to track gross sales or net revenue of literature sales from Europe. Getting an estimate involves manually checking past sales records and receipts. Unfortunately the EC does not have the human resources to do this. One example of such sales records research produced a net sales figure of **USD 13,937** for the period January – August 2015. But this did not include bulk purchases of foreign language books that were printed and shipped from the US. 2017 will be the first year when such figures will be more easily tracked because of the shift to selling on Amazon (in Europe) and printing all European language literature in Europe. It is also our hope that the Finance Committee make appropriate improvements in their financial reporting to be able to capture any sales that still get processed in the US either through the adultchildren.org shopping cart or through Amazon in the US/North America.

V. Goals for the year ahead

- 1) Update our plan and budget for 2017 and have it approved by the Board.
- 2) Add more support to our committee. The EC is desperately in need of native-English speaking members who love to write, have an interest in Europe, and want to do service by helping us to create and disseminate a large variety of information through various communication channels such as reports, newsletters and our web site. If you know anyone that would be interested, please have them contact us.
- 3) Begin selling ACA books on Amazon in Europe, starting with England, and then eventually extending to Spain (for the Castilian Spanish BRB) and other countries.
- 4) Begin printing the first ACA literature ever in Europe such as: Swedish Newcomer Booklet, Finnish Yellow Workbook, Russian Big Red Book, Castilian Spanish Big Red Book.
- 5) Hold our 4th annual European Meeting in Spain to celebrate the publishing of the Castilian Spanish Big Red Book and help the Spanish service structure get more organized.

- 6) Set up a proper database of contacts and actively build and work this list as a regular outreach to members for information, inspiration and support.
- 7) Begin educating members in Europe (through our database of contacts and web site) on the importance of 7th Tradition contributions.
- 8) Have for the first time, a reasonably accurate overview/balance sheet of finances for Europe, based on all sales of literature and 7th Tradition contributions originating from Europe, along with expenses incurred by the WSO to support EC operations and activities.
- 9) Add a lot more content to our new EC website so that it becomes an even more valuable international communications tool and platform for members in Europe.

VI. Conclusion

Like the voyagers of the Starship Enterprise, the fellow travelers of the European Committee boldly go where no member of the WSO has ever gone before. While this may seem obvious, what is less obvious, is that like the crew of the Enterprise, no one can predict what we will encounter once we actually visit some far-flung corner of our fellowship. As such, most of the activities noted for 2016, came only as a direct result of challenges encountered on this journey.

Another less obvious but very important point, is that by default, fellowships outside the US naturally suffer from some form of neglect and sometimes abandonment. In the context of our program, think of the added challenges this presents to the WSO. Physical distance, language and culture, all throw up barriers that adult children the world over have to overcome if they want to obtain the same level of emotional sobriety that originated in, and is commonly found in the US. Even if this neglect is not intentional, it is a natural part of our worldwide fellowship's DNA. Indeed, many fellowships outside the US, are like the middle child trying to find their own way.

That is why it cannot be underestimated how important it can be for fellowships outside the US to make personal contact with members of the WSO or others in the US. Because it is only through this personal contact that they get to learn more about our fellowship and the concept of service, or learn that they are doing just fine with their own personal, group or national development. In short, the ability to connect with a representative of the source, provides an unparalleled ability for them to compare notes, benchmark their progress, or gain assurance and peace of mind.

We have truly been humbled to see foreign fellowships accomplish so much with so little that we continue to do what we can, and ask that the fellowship and Board supports us in our efforts.