



THE VOICE OF ELSA

Newsletter of the European League of Stuttering Associations

Number 3

December 1990

Editorial

Dear Readers,

On the right, a reproduction of the birth certification of ELSA, the European League of Stuttering Associations is shown - or, to be more accurate, the founding documents signed by the delegates of the National Associations at the inaugural meeting at Darmstadt/Germany. In this issue of the newsletter we report on the meeting, provide a summary of the results and an outlook on what lies ahead.

As you will have noticed, the newsletter finally received a 'real' title which was the outcome of a creative brainstorming session at Darmstadt. 'The Voice of ELSA' certainly is a very suggestive name; rumour has it that some people have already comically corrupted it to 'the noise of ELSA' for a joke. Anyway - we do hope ELSA's voice will always be loud and clear enough to be heard inside and outside the European stuttering arena!

The Editors

THE AGENCIES PRINCIPLES ARE CLOSED BY THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTATIVES
 SIGNED AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING AT DARMSTADT ON 22ND SEPTEMBER 1980

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| FINLAND | <i>Handwritten signature</i> | SAY |
| NORWAY | <i>Handwritten signature</i> | NARS |
| DENMARK | <i>Handwritten signature</i> | F.S.D. |
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| POLAND | <i>Handwritten signature</i> | SEPS |
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| GREECE | <i>Handwritten signature</i> | ABSES |
| FRANCE | <i>Handwritten signature</i> | A.S.P. |

A Good Start for Europe

Report from the ELSA Inaugural Meeting

by Edwin Farr and Konrad Schäfers

Darmstadt/Germany, 21 - 23rd September 1990: Rain clouds drifted across the dark Autumn sky for most of this weekend. However, Darmstadt, geographically the heart of Europe was an ideal venue for what was about to take place. The rain did not dampen the enthusiasm of delegates from 13 stuttering self-help associations from 12 countries who came together to perform the foundation of ELSA, the European League of Stuttering Associations.

The weekend was the culmination of liaison, initiatives and ideas put forward in the previous two European Newsletters and stemming from the 1987 1st European Conference for Stuttering Self-Help Groups in St. Andreasberg, and the 1989 2nd International Conference at Cologne. The delegates representing their respective national associations worked together to produce a set of 'Working Principles' which were signed by all representatives, ELSA being officially formed on 23rd September 1990.

ELSA is essentially a Top Umbrella Organisation consisting of the European National Organisations pursuing mainly two objectives, as stated in the Working Principles:

- 1) Providing an exchange of concepts and experiences of stuttering self-help, and therapies;
- 2) Contributing to the representation of the interests of people who stutter to European and International bodies and institutions including International Associations of therapists.

What's In A Name?

Much attention was given to the discussion about the name of the Top Organisation. This certainly was not only for aesthetical reasons - although the result in this respect is not at all bad. The name question once more triggered a discussion on the principal character of the organisation: was it to be a Federation, a Union, a Society, an Association? Concerns had been expressed that a European organisation might interfere with the business of the national groups or restrict their rights to act on an international level. The term 'League' was considered to be the most appropriate one, stressing the independence of the member associations. It is not intended that ELSA will replace the existing National Organisations but would further their cooperation by carrying out tasks they pass over voluntarily.

Another objection raised was the danger of becoming over-organised. This is one of the reasons why the organisational structure was kept as simple as possible: ELSA will consist of a Board comprising two delegates from each country. It is anticipated that Board meetings will be held every year to progress the objectives of the League. Three Officials were voted into office at this inaugural meeting and they will administer the work of ELSA. The Officials are: Edwin Farr (Gt. Britain); Odd Bjorn Ure (Norway); Konrad Schäfers (Germany). The German Bundesvereinigung have offered the use of their Cologne

office as the base for the next two years.

Money Money Money...

How is ELSA going to be financed? A small donation has been made by each of the member associations and this money will provide for postage, stationery and general administration costs. This will definitely not be sufficient to enable effective work on the international scene to be carried out. Donations are welcomed from everybody, and one of the major tasks of the Board is to investigate funding possibilities. Thanks are due to the Commission of the European Communities who with a grant of ECU 2.000 contributed to the success of the meeting.

Plans and actions

The organisational question was not the only item on the agenda, and maybe not even the most important one. Everybody agreed that forming a European Top Organisation is not a goal in itself but just the most promising strategy whilst pursuing the aims of European cooperation. Accordingly the discussion of plans and actions took up a lot of time during the weekend. Various suggestions and ideas had been expressed by the National Associations, this finally led to a couple of concrete projects to be tackled in the near future:

- The **European Newsletter** will remain of the utmost importance as the major link between the European groups. It is planned to be published semi-

annually in Spring and Autumn, each issue being devoted to a special topic. The next issue (Spring 1991) will contain reports of the National Associations' current situation and their development during 1990.

- One of the prominent tasks ELSA could have is to serve as a reference point providing information on all aspects of stuttering self-help (and, later on maybe, of stuttering therapy) for internal and external users. As a first step towards this goal a **data bank** and a **library collection** of relevant literature is to be set up at Cologne. All national groups are invited to send sample copies of their materials (newsletters, brochures, leaflets, books etc.), or, if it is not possible to send the originals, detailed bibliographic information including a description of the contents. Short abstracts in English would be extremely helpful.

- Due to financial reasons a general European meeting in the near future is highly unlikely. What ELSA can do is to organise **seminars** on special topics for one or two delegates per member organisation (the so-called 'multipliers'). The first seminar is

- The ELSA Members:**
- * Association Belge des Bègues et Exbègues
 - * Association des Bègues de France
 - * Association for Stammerers (GB)
 - * Association Francaises des Bègues
 - * Associazione Nazionale 'La Lingua Amara' (I)
 - * Bundesvereinigung Stotterer-Selbsthilfe e.V. (D)
 - * Finska Stammares Förening rf
 - * Foreningen for Stammer i Danmark
 - * Nederlandse Stuttervereniging 'Deoathenea'
 - * Norsk Interesseorganisasjon for Stamme
 - * Österreichische Selbsthilfe für Stottern
 - * Polski Związek Jakających się
 - * Sveriges Stammaresföreningars Riksförbund

going to be held at Strasbourg in Spring 1991, combined with an ELSA Board meeting

- Another important task will be to maintain existing **contacts** and make further **contacts** with international organisations. The work with the EC Dialogue Group will be continued, and recently ELSA entered into relations with the International Fluency Association which is devoted to the interdisciplinary research on stuttering. (*More on the IFA in the next newsletter.*)

Still More To Do

A number of details concerning these projects still need to be specified, nevertheless all representatives were very content with the results to date. The working atmosphere was nothing less than tremendous - no doubt, ELSA is a welcome child!

ELSA - How to Work Fluently

by Odd Bjørn Ure

It took some time to agree on the working principles that will guide the work which will be carried out by the European League of Stuttering Associations. The next step is to continue the setting up of a working plan. This will probably be the burning issue at the forthcoming meeting of ELSA, scheduled for May 1991.

However, the inaugural meeting in Darmstadt touched upon some tasks that we have to cope with until the next meeting. Some of these tasks will probably also be found in the

working plan which should be one result from the meeting in May.

Benefit From European Work

Our plan to make a joint announcement of ELSA by January 1, 1991 illustrates how the national associations can interact with their coordinating body at the European level. When each national association approaches the press before January 1, why not use this opportunity to get some PR around oneself? What do ELSA mean for us? Some thoughts along

this line will provide a valuable input when making the working plan.

Apart from creating more awareness and understanding of speech impediments, the dissemination of information is, i.e., also a way to recruit members to different therapeutic and social activities. In addition, there are organisations of therapists that we have the opportunity to cooperate with. How shall this be done, how shall we ensure that the interests of stutterers are taken care of among professionals who, of course, have to put forward their own interests?

Economic Difficulties

When plunging down to this interesting world, we will face some economic difficulties. This brings me to another challenge in front of us: How to finance an active, un-bureaucratic European coordinating body? Till now, one major source has been identified: The Commission of the European Communities. The search has to go on, but not only by the

ELSA officials. Please look for some national funds, that are not only devoted to national citizens! (For example, in Norway there are some purses that can be used for all delegates attending the Nordic conferences.)

And in a longer perspective: Can ELSA have access to funds that could be used as "seed-money" for strengthening and even starting new activities for stutterers outside the present circle of ELSA members?

Eastern Europe: A New Challenge

But first ELSA should be allowed to breath a bit. When doing this, we will notice, even stronger, the winds from Eastern Europe. Luckily, Poland is already with us. During the short period of consolidation we must be aware of the fact that ELSA is a framework which can be shaped mainly by the ideas, proposals and examples received from the 12 signatories. An extension of this framework without having founded it sufficiently could endanger the whole thing.

P.S.: The ELSA officials have to prepare a working plan that will be put forward to the May meeting. We will ask each national association to send a letter to ELSA with proposed activities from May 1991 and one year ahead.

When doing this, please bear in mind that we have a limited budget! The letter should be received by ELSA before March 1, 1991. D.S.

