

## **International cooperation revival by Peter Sundman**

I'm so happy how the EBTA International cooperation task-group has developed in the last months! The meeting at the EBTA conference in Leuwaarden had representatives from UK, Switzerland, Australia, Finland, Belgium, Russia, Latvia, Slovenia and Netherlands. Since then at least three important initiatives have come up: To support the Latvian sf-community to further sf-practice, the Belgian question how to gather research in favour of sf for the authorities and the Dutch sf-group's question how to set up a national sf-association. Why am I happy? Well, EBTA has tried to create a forum between the National Associations for over three years without results. Suddenly it's happening! Progress!!

How did it happen?

Firstly, maybe the timing was right. After Steve's and Insoo's death the sf-community got divided into several 'camps' to develop their own things. Also some conflicts split the field. EBTA for instance got critics for being a too close club. Existing national associations put their attention to local issues. In most places the groups and associations are still small and vulnerable. It seems to me that there is again more willingness to cooperate and get more strength from it.

Secondly John Wheeler, the leader of this task-group, had analysed previous attempts well and did some things differently. As earlier attempts to ask for what the National Associations want and encourage them to be in contact with each other hadn't worked, John very thoroughly set up the meeting in Leuwaarden with a more detailed plan of action. His way of leading the meeting nicely encouraged people and he's idea to be a 'switchboard' to connect people seemed to fit very well the needs at the moment.

Thirdly new skilful and enthusiastic people became involved. I was struck in Leuwaarden at the international cooperation meeting how many new people there were as representatives for an association or group. I was also pleased to notice how effortless this younger generation networked. It may be a coincidence that they are with us, but we old timers should be happy about it!

Fourthly EBTA's new structure helped.

This was the first year of the new EBTA as a normal membership organization and with task groups doing most of the practical work. The change has been very tangible within the board. The board has had more meetings than ever before, thinking what would benefit the members. The task-groups revitalized many functions, a newsletter was for instance born thank's to Geert Lefeervre, himself a new member on the board. It seemed to me in Leuwaarden that the participants, many of whom are members, felt they can have a say easier and more than before. – This is also true. It is the idea of the new structure.

What are the next steps?

Writing this, I realize clearer than before that the veterans like me, now need to make an extra effort to support the newcomers in their efforts. We need to remember and tell about our experiences how to further sf-practice, where to find research and how to present it and how to make an association! We need to take the time from our busy schedules and engage ourselves! The best is, that these new ladies and guys and are very skilful, so they will use the information in their own way and then we old timers can enjoy the results of their work. 😊

You in the younger generation need to be persistent. Try again, if you don't get answers. Get in touch personally with those you think have something to offer you. This is how we did it and got things slowly going. Like Jacek from Poland, who for many years has travelled through Europe with old cars and buses to stay in touch. Today it's possible to connect easier and in many different ways. So let's do it, like Insoo might have said.

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