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Facilitation in Eastern Europe – Experience from Serbia (and Montenegro)

Sladana Milošević | Bojan Đurić

Mobilis Ltd is a small company that has been providing facilitation, coaching and training in Serbia since 2005. Before establishing Mobilis, principals Sladana Milošević and Bojan Đurić worked as freelancers for different donors and international organizations in Serbia. During that period they attended trainings in participation skills and different Train-the-Trainers courses where they learned about facilitation and coaching.

They joined IAF in 2006, after learning about IAF from UK facilitator Tim Sims, with whom they had often worked in Serbia since 2002, and attended IAF Europe conferences in 2006 and 2007.

Mobilis has collaborated with facilitators from other countries on projects implemented by United Nations, Municipal Support Program of Swiss Embassy and different programs funded by EU, and facilitated planning retreats for companies in the business sector. For the first time this year, Mobilis delivered facilitation skills training in the Serbian language for the employees of Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities.

Sladjana and Bojan are part of the group of Ser-

bian facilitators who established the IAF Serbia Network and actively participate in its work.

The IAF Europe Newsletter is delighted that they are able to share their experiences about facilitating in Serbia with the rest of IAF's European membership.

What is different in Eastern Europe (Serbia) ?

*During seven years in providing facilitation in Serbia, and also in Montenegro (now a separate country), we identified situations and problems that usually occurred in preparing the facilitation event, during facilitation itself, and after the event. The list presented here is a list of **all typical situations we identified during this time**. At the beginning, it was more difficult than today as people are now more familiar with the concept of facilitation.*

The recent history (many years of country isolation, wars during the 1990s, hyperinflation and a bad economic situation) changed people and their views. Some old cultural and social habits that reflect on facilitation events are still

present and very difficult to change. In the text given below we tried to present them in details. We also presented ways to overcome problems and difficult situations.

Preparation of the event

- Preparation is considered important for clients although they often cannot clearly state what they want to be the result and what is the purpose of the event. Process-oriented working culture is dominant – i.e. focus on process, not on results.
- Preparation is always done in a “last minute” way.

We have developed a questionnaire for the preparation of facilitation event that our clients have to fill in long enough before the event and to focus on results they want to achieve. This is a good way to show them that preparation is important, that it has to be very detailed and result-oriented, and that we want everything in a written form.

Beginning of the event

- Rules: While participants usually fully agree with the rules defined, they tend not to respect them during the work. For example, mobile phones are widely used during meetings and other events.
- Very bad time management. In our culture, it is a habit to be late and although participants agree with a rule “Be on time” at the start, often they do not respect it during the event itself. In order to respect rules, we usually introduce an



Facilitation skills training (in Serbian) for employees of Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, Belgrade, Serbia, April 2008

activity that participant has to perform if he/she breaks the rule (singing in front of the group is something that helps a lot – people are embarrassed to sing so they avoid breaking rules).

- Status in this part of Europe is very important, so it is difficult for participants to accept the rule, 'No titles'. Some participants even refuse to participate under this rule.
- Large distance between people with status/titles and those without them. It has happened many times that if a person works in a group of participants who are his/her subordinates, they tend not to participate fully but rather listen to what their superior will say/decide.

We always give very clear instructions about why we want everyone to be equal in the process.

- We have to be very careful with warm-ups, ice-breakers and energizers. Participants tend to

call it “playing games instead of working seriously”. This is because of the school system used in this region for many years that is still dominant even today.

We choose ice-breakers and energizers depending on the structure of the group. We regularly use the IAF methods database.

At the beginning of the event:

- The facilitator’s role has to be clear. The differences between facilitator, trainer and lecturer should be explained as people usually have different expectations of facilitators
- The senior person should introduce the facilitator, especially female facilitators. In the male dominated culture which we have here, this is very important and always helps.
- People do not like long introductions and too much self-promotion of the facilitator at the beginning of the event. The facilitator should write about himself/herself and mention academic titles and positions he/she holds (something that participants will recognize and respect, like academic titles)

During the event

- At the beginning of our work (in 2001), people were not used to active participation (no learning through practical exercises)
- “Blame culture” is dominant. Participants are afraid to make mistakes, and very often, they are blocked and do not participate fully.
- If they do not understand, they will not admit or ask for clarification (“teacher should not be

asked” rule in our schools)

- Participants usually expect the facilitator to “show subject knowledge” (“power of having knowledge”)
- Participants have strong “respect for teachers” and they expect lecturing most of the time. Sometimes simulations, role-plays, and drawing exercises are not acceptable. When we attended IAF conferences in 2006 and 2007, we were amazed to see that everybody is ready to “play”.

During the process, we show participants how much we appreciate their input and how important it is for them to share their ideas. This motivates them to participate and openly present their views.

- Participants very often show a negative attitude towards everything, rather than a positive thinking approach. (This is a dominant way of thinking in life in general).
- “Short-term thinking perspective” is evident. For instance, when asked to define goals and priorities during strategic planning sessions, they would say “We should stop talking and planning; let’s start with some actions finally!”
- Sensitivity to western culture best-practices and examples is also evident

We simply must avoid western culture best-practices and examples and we always try to find domestic ones.

- During team work, participants do not speak openly and give feedback to each other but rather speak behind others’ backs (cultural issue)

- People are more oriented toward people than toward tasks. This has to be respected in this part of Europe.
- We have to try harder than facilitators from Western countries for whom participants have more respect
- Besides dominant male culture, there is another thing: respect for older people (here “old” means “experienced”). So as a young person, you are often considered to be not experienced enough.

It is important to present your qualifications so to show participants that you have enough experi-

ence (academic degree, good references...)

- Working in Serbia and working in UK for instance is different; we did staff retreats facilitation with UK team of facilitators in Serbia in 2006 – 4 of us had difficulties to facilitate the event of 80 participants. Our UK colleagues noticed that it is because of “cultural differences”.

During our many years of working with facilitators from UK, we discovered that foreigners can help us as facilitators by giving us the same tasks and level of responsibility as they have. When we are presented as equal partners in the prepara-



Facilitation of pre-training for Business Start-up Centre Bar,, SPARK project(Dutch funded), Podgorica, Montenegro, March 2008

tion, delivery and reporting of the event, this gives local audiences a clear picture of our capacities.

Feedback

- Participants are not used to giving honest and "positive feedback with effects". Actually they do not know how to do it and they do not understand the benefits of it. People are not used to feedback here in general.

We always emphasize the importance of feedback for our personal improvement and how much we appreciate it ("we will not be offended if they say what should be improved").

- Some participants use negative feedback that is actually not helping facilitators to improve their work

After the event

- There is no practice of lessons learned to be shared.

Although most of the time reports are not demanded, we always prepare and share them. Our clients usually like it and find it very useful. As well, new methods that we develop are available on our Website.

Demand for facilitation

- There is still a very little demand for facilitation of staff retreats or strategic planning retreats in the business sector.
- In some cases there is no real understanding of what facilitation is.

(We do not translate the word facilitator into our

language but instead we use word "Fasilitacija, fasilitator" (recently one of our participant at the workshop said: "I thought you are falsificators").

Conclusions

Despite the challenges, it is good to be in a position to present people with new approaches and new ways of thinking and solving problems, doing planning, creative thinking, out of box thinking, evaluation of work... Once they realize how beneficial it is and how oriented towards them it is, they appreciate it very much.

There are huge potentials for development and practicing facilitation in Serbia, and we will continue to 'create' the market. We hope that in doing so, we will have the great support of IAF, whom we promote strongly in our country.

For preparation of this article we used:

"Successfully Facilitating Multicultural Groups" by Christine Hogan, The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, edited by Sandy Schuman, Copyright IAF, 2005, Published by Jossey-Bass



First initial meeting as an IAF Serbia Network

Green World Café

Anders Vesterberg



Anders Vesterberg

I live in northern Sweden and have worked with software development for some twenty years, half of the time with my own company. I have worked as a teacher and have always been interested in people and how people communicate, in other words—dialogue.

For a long time I have had the habit to reflect, look back and write down observations about my path in life. Of special interest to me were the different aspects of the learning process.

I found some good books and made my own experiences. I noticed that reflecting and writing it down greatly enhanced the learning process, whether it be learning to play an instrument, write software applications or learning to live.

My quest for understanding the learning process together with my concern for the environment led me to discover Systems Thinking. As a software developer I was trained in analytical and reductionist thinking, so this discov-

ery shed some new light on quite a number of things. I said to myself; “This is the way the world works”. It felt perfectly natural. I continued to dig deeper into this area and found great application of it in my profession as IT consultant, project manager and father and as a citizen of this earth.

While looking for ways to apply systems thinking, dialogue, reflection and learning I stumbled upon the World Café concept a while ago. To me it was like finding a precious jewel.

The World Café

The World Café is a way to have conversations in small groups and explore a given theme. It was originally “invented” by Juanita Brown and David Isaacs. They have put together a number of proven principles about dialogue, creative thinking, appreciative inquiry and collective intelligence and it has been used successfully, world-wide in different contexts.

The conversations build on each other as people move between groups (tables), ideas are cross-pollinated and people discover new insights into the questions that we choose to discuss. Seeing things from a broader perspective

(systems thinking) is a key.

Now, if you are concerned about the environment and discover the World Café concept, what do you do? You arrange Green World Cafés!

A Green World Café

Together with a good friend at the Swedish Red Cross in my town, I have arranged four Green World Cafés during this autumn. We had a great time with every one actively exploring questions like: "What is a sustainable lifestyle?", "What is our personal responsibility?", "What is social sustainability?", "How does empathy relate to sustainability?".

We tried to create a relaxed and inviting café-atmosphere. We were not a huge crowd, but for me to experience the connections and conversations that emerge among diverse people, young and old, businessmen and students, environmentalists and just "ordinary" people, that is so



World Café table

inspiring. Diversity is really powerful. Facilitation dialogue is the most exciting (and challenging) thing I have done for a long time.

By having these cafés we hope to inspire people and help them to become more active to explore a sustainable lifestyle on their own. It is all too easy to get paralyzed or passive concerning environmental issues, believing that it is only experts, politicians and technology that can make a change. No, we can make a change if we begin to think and act together!

Next steps

The attendance was not as big as we hoped. We had ads in the local newspaper and tried to spread the word among organizations. But we have learned a lot and almost everyone that came to the meetings were positive and enthusiastic. A nice effect also is that there are a number of people who wants to be part of the next step, whatever that will be.

We will do a second series of Green World Cafés in the spring and try some other approaches to reach people, going to the places where people meet and even more finding out what really matters to them. Having these conversations is a way to enhance democracy in town. I would love to include some politicians in this work.

Afterwards a few of us discussed the possibilities to include people from other countries in the conversations through video-conferencing systems. Imagine discussing sustainability issues with people from Greenland,

Malaysia or Borneo, or having “joint-cafés” happening at the same time at different places.

We need mirrors

We have ways of thinking and solving problems in Europe that we believe is right. Many people are not aware of that their way of thinking is just one way of thinking. We have one perspective, but there are more. We try to be “objective”, but in fact we have blind spots that become visible to us only through meeting people from other cultures. These people are gifts to us!

This is an alternative way to look at immigrants. They are gifts, not problems. We are often so eager to export our thoughts and solutions. We have good ideas, yes, but do we know it all? People from other cultures are in a way like mirrors. Through conversation and friendship with them, we can see ourselves in new light and we can change to the better.



World Café table



World Café

On-line conversations

We have people with different ethnicity close by, in our own city, but would it not be fascinating to utilize new technology to connect across cultures? You might read this and live in New Zealand, Kenya or Singapore. You are a gift to the Swedish culture and I am a gift to yours. Do you see the possibilities with cross-cultural conversations?

I believe that I can make a difference, at least in some world somewhere. I have come to believe that living is being on a journey. Events and opportunities are unfolding around us and if we are open, we can learn and grow as a person much more than we can imagine - and make a difference somewhere.

I would love to discuss these issues with you if you are interested. My blog is at www.vesterberg.se and I can be reached at [anders2\(AT\)vesdakon.se](mailto:anders2(AT)vesdakon.se)

Who's afraid of climate change? The story of a research paper

Penny Walker

"I'm fearful about things like climate change ... sometimes to the point of being overwhelmed by my feelings."

Agreed to by 70.5% of people whose job it is to create 'green' change in organizations.

Over the last ten years, I've been working with internal and external organizational change agents, whose remit is to help organizations perform radically better from an environmental point of view. I gradually realized that I could see some patterns in my work with clients, but I wasn't sure whether these patterns were 'my stuff', 'the group's stuff', or 'stuff in the wider world'.

For example, especially in groups of people who have faced the scientific evidence about how a warming world will affect our climate, plants and animals and probably affect global supplies of fresh water, food and fuel, occasionally someone will display an extreme negative emotional reaction such as anger, helplessness, fear or grief that catches the rest of the group (and the facilitator) off guard.

People come into the room expecting to talk

about how to promote energy efficiency in the office, and they are faced with a colleague on the edge of tears. There is a lot to be asked and reflected on about how the facilitator might respond in the moment: that is for another article.

What I was interested in, when researching a recent paper, was whether this phenomenon existed in the wider world of organizational change agents for sustainable development (a rather clumsy collective term), and if so, what implications it might hold for their effectiveness in their work.

Opportunity knocks

Earlier this year, an invitation to submit a proposal for a chapter in a book on consulting for sustainable business, followed by an open invitation to submit a paper to an academic conference, the colloquium of the European Academy of Business in Society (EABIS), suggested the time was right to check out my question more formally.

I wanted to find out what motivates these organizational change agents for sustainable development. I also wanted to find out how they feel about the subject matter they work

with, and what they 'do' with their emotions. In particular, I was interested in what support they currently get, and would like to get, to help with any negative emotions they may experience.

I drafted a survey that asked people to agree or disagree with specific statements, and also included a lot of open comment boxes. The survey was created on a web-based survey hosting site called Survey Monkey, which has a free basic level, and a more flexible paid-for service.

I tested out the first version with half a dozen clients and peers, and made some adjustments as a result of their feedback. This stage was invaluable. As well as picking up on niggling problems with formatting and ambiguous questions, I added some additional statements suggested by my guinea pigs, and reworked a set of questions.

Then the survey went live! I invited people to take part in three ways: a group e-mail to a long list of contacts; advertising the survey on a

number of relevant e-groups; and including a link to it on my website. The survey was open for a month, and I had just under 100 responses.

What did I find?

Analyzing a survey of this kind is a lot harder than you'd think! It was a long survey, and to be frank, many parts of it didn't yield clear responses. So I had to be ruthless when writing the conference paper and book chapter, including only those results which together formed a story, whilst staying true to the results and not embroidering them.

The headlines go something like this:

- Organizational change agents for sustainable development see themselves as being in the service of a goal which is bigger than their organization;
- They believe that for society to move towards truly sustainable development, a very great deal of change is needed.
- Since they see themselves as part of creating that change, from time to time the challenge is overwhelming, and it's hard to stay optimistic.
- Whilst they agree that sharing their positive feelings (hope, curiosity, enthusiasm) in a work situation makes them more effective, they are divided about how to manage their negative feelings.
- Negative feelings tend to 'leak out' in con-



versations 'at the margins' - like on the post-workshop walk from the training room back to reception!

When I shared these observations at the EABIS Colloquium, the response was very positive. People commented that this made a lot of sense to them, and chimed in with their own personal and professional experience.

Lessons learned

I learned two sets of lessons from this process: one for my own work, the other about participation in academically-oriented research. What implications can be drawn, for my work and that of others who consult to and facilitate conversations for and with these change agents? In summary:

- We need to become better informed about, and more skillful in dealing with, the emotional journey our clients may be on.
- We need to create safe spaces with high trust, to enable sharing.
- We can equip ourselves to provide support through coaching, action learning, and other specific interventions.

And what about the lessons on research and writing?

- You don't have to be an academic in order to be accepted to present a paper at an academic conference.
- Academics are very interested in the reflective observations of practitioners. Appar-

ently we practitioners have "access" which is much harder for full-time researchers to achieve.

- People are very helpful. If you ask someone to test a survey for you, they probably will.
- The discipline of having to write a paper forces you to put your thoughts in order, create a logical and narrative flow, justify your conclusions with evidence and excise the irrelevant.



Penny Walker

The papers and presentation are available on my website: http://www.penny-walker.co.uk/sd_change_agents_survey.html.

Effective workshops in five steps

By Annet Noordik and Jeroen Blijisie

Book profile

In the book "*Hartelijk gefaciliteerd!*", Noordik and Blijisie have made the organization and facilitation of workshops accessible and easier to do.

"It is the first Dutch complete workshop handbook" says Maarten van Rijn, the chairman of IAF-Benelux. In the six chapters, they address the power of the workshop, the workshop in five steps, workshop techniques, facilitator competencies (based on the IAF standards), group dynamics and they describe three extended practical cases. In their workshop approach they distinguish five steps: Orient, Prepare, Facilitate, Report results and Organize follow up. For every step, the authors describe the key issues, give tips and address the most important pitfalls for the facilitator. The steps are summarized on the included bookmarker checklist. The included dvd contains 100 minutes of inspiring inter-

views with the authors and their clients, demonstration of workshop techniques and things that are worth knowing about workshop facilitation.



Chapter 2 highlighted: The workshop approach in five steps

In many organizations, workshops are an important way of getting the people involved in the change process. In practice, however, we sometimes see that management and employees are disappointed about the effect of the organized workshop. Problems often origin from an underestimation of the effort required for workshop preparation. According to the authors, for a workshop to

be organized, the facilitator should work on preparation at least three to five times the workshop duration. So, a one-day session can easily take a week in hours to prepare it well (and several weeks run time). Also, the workshop results do often not get the attention they need to get implemented; the way follow-up

will be realized needed to be addressed in the preparation phase. A workshop in organizational change is a complex intervention. Therefore, in the second chapter of the book Noordik and Blijssie describe the most important things to do before, during and after a workshop. They distinguish a five- step approach: Orient, Prepare, Facilitate, Report results and Organize follow-up. Every step in the process has its in- and output (see picture).

Step 1: Orient

Before starting the concrete preparation activities, it is important to stand still and ask your-



self 'What?', 'Who?' and 'How?'. To start with the what-question: as a facilitator, it is key to be acquainted enough with the problem to be solved by the workshop: what is the occasion, the perceived causes of the problem and how have people tried to solve the problem before? Secondly, the who-question: who am I doing this for, what are his (personal) interests to solve the problem and is he the real problem owner? How does his environment perceive the problem? Are there any sponsors to be found at management level? And who should be involved in the workshop (knowledge carriers and stakeholders)? Thirdly, the how-question: what is the global approach of the workshop? What are the key questions to be addressed? On what term should the session take place, what is the optimum duration and the best venue? And what is the required follow-up? Altogether, the answers to these questions should result in the initial design criteria for the workshop.

Step 2: Prepare

Now, it is time to concretely organize the workshop. Based on the initial design criteria the concept workshop scenario can be made, participants selected and invited, materials taken care of and venue booked. The workshop scenario is a document that develops in the period before the workshop. Ideally, the facilitator initiates a design team, consisting of himself, the workshop owner, and some representatives from the organization. The design team should

have all knowledge needed to make a proper workshop design (and yes, the people of the organization often know which people should (not) be invited and which questions should (not) be asked during the workshop). After this step, everything should be set and done for a good session.

Step 3: Facilitate

Morning has broken of the workshop day(s). Having everything prepared, the facilitator and workshop owner can be confident that all conditions are there for a successful workshop. The session runs through the three phases Start-up, Problem solution and Wrap-up. During Start-up, the workshop owner kicks off, people introduce themselves, the problem is presented, rules of the game are agreed and a warming-up discussion facilitated. During the Problem solution phase, the group works on the answers to the key questions in order to find solutions which are optimally supported by all participants. Finally in the Wrap-up phase, the workshop results are summarized, the follow-up activities agreed and the group evaluates the workshop results and process. The session is closed by the workshop owner.

Step 4: Report results

During the workshop, the facilitator has made photographs of the results (flipcharts, brown papers etc) and has made impressions of participants at work. With both types of pictures, the workshop report is made. The report liter-



Jeroen Blijssie and Annet Noordik at the launch of their book October 7, 2008. Photo by Bart de Rijk.

ally shows the results, possibly with some written clarifications. Together with the workshop impressions, the report is complete and can be distributed to all participants and possibly more people in the organization (depending on what is agreed in this respect). The workshop report is an important document in the next step: Follow-up.

Step 5: Follow-up

Finally, the results and agreed actions are followed up. During the previous steps, the facilitator has paid sufficient attention to the things that are needed to be done in order to really make the workshop worthwhile. Here, it is key that he makes sure the results are supported by the group, communicated well and owners of follow-up activities are appointed.

Jeroen Blisjje and Annet Noordik give training courses based on their book. More information on: www.hartelijkgefaciliteerd.nl (In Dutch!)

European Joint Masters International Communications, linking the IAF and the academic world

By Jon Jenkins

The European Joint Masters International Communications is being developed by Hanze University in cooperation with universities in Leeds, Vilnius, Budapest, Milan and Sophia. The development of this joint master's degree program is funded by the European Community.

The curriculum will include facilitation. Most communications programs are typically directed toward advocacy, such as public relations, marketing, diplomacy, etc. This master's program recognizes that inquiry, i.e. asking questions, is an important competency. As such, the skills and knowledge of a facilitator are seen as key to that competency.

The IAF Europe has been asked to advise the consortium about this. The two other institutions providing advice are the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research Europe (SIETAR) and the European Association of Communications Directors (EACD). In addition to facilitating some of the organizational sessions, the IAF Europe is being asked to:

1. Provide guidance in establishing professional competencies which are already established by the IAF;



Entrance Hanze University

2. Offer top level mentored internship positions, including assessment of graduation assignments and student work. Students will ask organizations where there are IAF members for internships and for the opportunity to do research toward a graduation thesis. In both cases the sponsoring organization will provide a supervisor for the intern;
3. Offer Professional Certification. The CPF program would fulfill this requirement. It may be that a graduating student will have enough experience to begin the certification

process before graduation. In other cases a suggested route to certification could be included in the curriculum;

4. Provide an Advisory Board member; and
5. Provide the means for disseminating student research and study outcomes. This would mean that students and graduates would be encouraged to present sessions at IAF conferences.
6. They could write articles for the IAF Journal, Global FlipChart and the IAF Europe Profes-

sionalization series. They could do research for the IAF Methods Database. Five students have already done research for the IAF; one from Delft University, two from The University of Groningen and two from The Hanze University Groningen.

IAF Europe has over the last 4 or 5 years been looking into the potential relationships between the academic world and the IAF. This is one step toward developing the kinds of relationships desired by the IAF.

IAF Europe Team holds first face to face planning session

The Groningen conference was far too busy for the new IAF Europe team to do much more than make some quick plans, so we were delighted to be able to meet in Manchester in early November to hold a "face to face" team planning session.

We shared what we had learned about how the IAF Europe region is organized and has worked in the past, and identified resources available to us as a team, and our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. We identified a vision of what we wanted to achieve by the end of 2009, aided considerably by your helpful input at the conference and by email, and the milestones that will keep us on track towards those goals.



Martin Gilbraith

In the January newsletter, we will bring you an update on our conference planning, and share

more about our "new year" resolutions. As 2008 draws to an end, we thank you all for your contributions to IAF and the European region in 2008, and wish all of you health, happiness, prosperity and fulfillment in your work throughout 2009.

IAF-Members set the flag for Facilitation in Germany

By Holger Scholz

During the IAF Europe Conference in October in Groningen, our colleagues from Germany seized the opportunity to sign and hand over the Memorandum of Understanding in order to become an IAF Affiliated Network. In the meantime, the IAF Board has agreed to the



Members of the new IAF Germany network hand over their affiliation request to Simon Wilson, at the Groningen conference in October 2008.

affiliation. The network will act as 'IAF Germany'. Planned activities are:

- regular meetings within the framework of the IAF Europe Conference
- ongoing exchange
- bi-annual Newsletter (e.g. following the IAF Europe Conference)
- project-related Meetings
- and of course, hosting future IAF Conferences in Germany

A steering committee has been constituted to advance the further development of IAF Germany. Members are Peter Döring, Helga Hartmann-Wall, Joy Kuhl, Guido Neuland, Christian Rieckmann, Holger Scholz, Christine Wank, and Roswitha Vesper.

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Serbian Facilitators' Network

by Suzana Zivkovic, Co-ordinator

In 2006, a group of six people from Serbia attended the IAF Conference in Stockholm, through scholarships provided by the IAF. Five of the six worked with GRM International AB's Reka Mleka project in Serbia; one represented a privately owned training and consulting company. As a result of attending the IAF conference, these facilitators began the process of establishing the Serbian Facilitators'

Network, assisted by Rosemary Cairns, CPF.

They held two planning sessions, circulated a questionnaire to all potential members, and created a participatory website. During the winter 2006/2007, they distributed information through email and personal contacts to people they knew were working as facilitators in various regions of Serbia.

The first formal gathering of the SFN was held on June 30th 2007 in Niš. During that meeting, activities for forming an IAF affiliated Serbian network were discussed, as well as responses to questionnaires and attendance at the IAF Conference in Scotland. Plans for the next meeting were made. After the first initial meeting, three more meetings were held at various places in Serbia over the next 18 months, in order to bring the SFN closer to its members. During these meetings mission and values of the SFN have been decided upon, we have created a joint vision and talked about the IAF and affiliation with the IAF.

Last year six members of the Network attended the European IAF conference in Edinburgh where they promoted the idea and the values of the SFN and received a lot of assistance from IAF members. The assistance has been in the shape of various training sessions. With the support of Jon and Maureen Jenkins, SFN members received a one day session on the technique of "Wall of Wonder" as well as discussion on how the profession of facilitator is regarded in Europe. Another training session was organized where Terry



Serbian participants at the 2006 Stockholm conference.

Bergdall from the USA held a one day session on "Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation" method.

The network has no formal organizational frame due to the long administrative procedures required in Serbia. Members of the network are already well-connected and work together on the future development of the network and for themselves as facilitators. Group members are in regular touch throughout the year by email and the SFN website.

Currently, the SFN has 42 members, of which 12 are meeting and communicating on a regular basis and constitute the core group.

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Opening a new chapter for the IAF

By Simon Wilson

We are inviting IAF members to help us think through how to attract more people to join the IAF where you live. As the IAF Board member responsible for membership and affiliations, I think we have a great membership offer which includes regular information and updates, fantastic conferences across the world, the opportunity to network with other facilitators worldwide, and of course access to the Certified Professional Facilitator programme. Although we have effective networks of facilitators in some parts of Europe, in the past we have not had the local structures to build membership and promote networking and development opportunities among IAF members.

We have always been able to invite organisations to affiliate to the IAF, and currently there are half a dozen affiliated organisations in Europe. However, the affiliation relationship could be strengthened to support our members better.

Earlier this year the IAF Board decided to



Simon Wilson

pilot a new approach of developing *chapters*. *Chapters* will be groups of IAF members in a country or region who get together for mutual support, networking and development, and who are aiming to build IAF membership in that country or region. This will effectively give us two different ways in which groups can engage with the IAF:

As an *affiliate*, an independent body which some of whose members are also IAF members, which links to the IAF while remaining separate; or

As a *chapter*, a sub-group of the IAF made up of IAF members only.

Our newest affiliate in Europe, IAF Germany, has already decided to pilot the chapter approach and we are looking for them to help us flesh out the chapter model in parallel with similar developments taking place in the US, Africa and Asia.

As you know, the IAF is a volunteer-led organisation, so we see chapters as a way of building up our organisation, enabling members in a country or region to support one another, and also to develop volunteer leadership at local or country level. Chapters could organise local networking and development events, recruit members, identify development needs, and raise the profile of facilitation where they operate. I would like to hear your thoughts on developing chapters.

Please feel free to post your comments on the IAF Forum at www.iaf-forum.org. Equally if you

would like to contact me direct, please mail me at [affiliate\(AT\)iaf-world.org](mailto:affiliate(AT)iaf-world.org). *Strategic Initiative Co-ordinator for Membership and Affiliations, IAF Board*

Welcome new and returning members, December 2008



We are delighted to welcome the following new members who joined the International Association of Facilitators during November.

- Daniel de Roo van Alderwerelt, Belgium
- Guido Neuland, Germany
- Lynn Powell, UK
- Sue Carter, UK
- Hester Abrams, UK
- S.C. Whalley, UK
- Eleanor Haller-Jorden, Switzerland

We are equally delighted to welcome back IAF members who renewed their memberships during October:

- Ganeas Dorairaju, Finland
- Simon Koolwijk, Netherlands
- Michael Stig Orbech, Denmark
- Robert Verheule, Netherlands
- Gerardo de Luzenberger, Italy

- Erik Kijne, Belgium
- Dawn Reeves, UK
- Maureen Jenkins, Netherlands
- Joseph Park, UK
- Sieglinde Hiinger, Austria
- Gillian Martin Mehers, Switzerland
- Edgar Hildering, Netherlands
- Clive Griffiths, UK

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

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Your contributions to your Newsletter are most welcome. For January's newsletter, submissions are requested by Dec. 28, 2008, to Newsletter at rep.europe@iaf-world.org. Our blog will be operational soon so you can post news items between Newsletters.