



**NETWORKING**  
**21 – 31 JANUARY 2002**  
**BACKGROUND DOCUMENT**

## **Introduction**

In Scouting adults are our most important resource. It is essential therefore that our structures and systems help people to be creative and fully use their skills and enthusiasm for the benefit of our customers – the young people. However, our structures and systems do not always make this possible. There is not always a good balance between the management of the organization (structures and systems) and the management of the human potential (the adults in Scouting). Often organisations struggle. New ways are needed to release the innovation, motivation and energy in the volunteers who often feel constrained within the structures and systems.

One of the new ways of working is '*networking*'. Networks are human systems which according to Nancy Foy '*need a spider, not a chairman; a list of members, not a set of bye-laws; groups, not committees; and a phone number (or email address) rather than a building*'.

Some networks already exist in Scouting at regional, national and local level. This WONDERforum is being run so that the concept of networking can be explored and discussed. The background paper contains thoughts and examples of good practice from people who have experience of using networks at various levels. This WONDERforum provides an opportunity to discuss networking with others (by email) and consider how networks and networking can enhance our work in the future, for the benefit of young people and Scouting.

This document includes the following:

1. **'Tents not Palaces?'** – some thoughts on the concept of networking by David Bull, member of the European Scout Committee and International Commissioner, The Scout Association (UK).
2. **'Networks – Working Methods'** – by Radu Stinghe, Director, Youth Programme for the European Scout Region
3. **Setting up and Maintaining a Network** – by Craig Turpie who is Network Co-ordinator of the Polish Network for The Scout Association (UK).
4. **The Outcomes and Benefits of the North South Network** – by David McKee, International Manager for The Scout Association UK.

# 1. Tents not Palaces

*Written by David Bull, Member of the European Scout Committee*

The title of this paper was coined by Charles Handy. It points up the need for different structures; no longer can we assume that we need permanent buildings from which to direct our work. This same change applies to groups of people who work in support of Scouting, in common with organisations of all kinds throughout the world.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

A network can be defined as *“an informal and ad-hoc group of people who act together to achieve a common task”*. In today’s world, where we need to be as economical with our resources as we can, using a network can be a very effective and efficient method of working in partnership with others. Networks are a good thing because they use resources to the maximum and encourage local initiative. They are cost effective and help with communications and problem solving. They are flexible and informal. They are ideal as a means of making an international partnership work.

*‘The effectiveness of a network is inversely proportional to its formality’*. This remark of Nancy Foy, quoted in Charles Handy’s important book *‘Understanding Voluntary Organisations’*, sums up a simple truth about networking. We need to be aware, however, that networks bring with them potential difficulties as well as advantages.

## 1.2 HOW NETWORKS WORK

A network works through its members. It has no formal structure although it is helpful to have one or more convenors, so that meetings can be arranged and information can be shared. Electronic communication is a major feature of successful networks, although it is also important for members of a network to meet up occasionally too.

Networks work in a culture which does not seek to command and control. They are not for the fainthearted and some people may find them threatening as they can be seen as trying to avoid the decision making processes of an organisation. It is important, therefore, for everyone to be clear about what a network is for and what the powers of its members are. This is an exercise in partnership.

There is a role for ‘headquarters’ in all this: in the case of nationally functioning networks to be ready to:

- provide a focus, mission statement or other clear set of terms of reference;
- liaise where necessary with the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) and other Scout Associations and provide prompt feedback to the network;
- facilitate meetings by nominating a convenor;
- ensure that relevant commissioners are kept fully informed of the work of the network and are encouraged to take part in it and be supportive;
- be supportive and show a commitment to enabling the network (this may mean a budgetary commitment as well as a human resource one);
- help with the machinery (not the editorial control) of communications by the network;
- advise on financial issues and accountabilities;
- review the work of the network periodically with all members of it;
- with the network members, agree on a reassignment of the task, a redefinition of the role or a winding down of the network when its work is done.

Of course, if a network is set up more locally, the role of ‘headquarters’ will be shared with the local commissioner or other appropriate people.

### **1.3 WHY DO NETWORKS WORK?**

Networks are a good thing because they use resources to the maximum and encourage local initiative. They are cost effective and help with communications and problem solving. They are flexible and informal: the characteristics of today's effective organisations in the third sector, that is voluntary or charitable groups which really do not fall in to either of the two traditional definitions of private or public sectors.

On the negative side, networks can lack focus, be isolated from the mainstream of the organisation and project the image of an 'in crowd'. On the other hand, it can sometimes be said that the legal responsibilities of Headquarters cannot be properly discharged if power is devolved to a network. That this is true in theory is undeniable. However, a network works through its members; if, for example, an exchange visit is arranged by a network it is the Groups, Districts or Areas/Counties who are responsible for matters which they are organising.

### **1.4 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE NETWORKS**

Every network should be capable of achieving certain aims:

- to achieve a specific task, whether long or short term (a network is not about personal development - although membership will usually achieve this for individuals - it is about getting important work done)
- to enthuse young people in all partner countries
- to involve young people in all partner countries
- to be realistic and accept its own limits
- to communicate effectively and fully to a wider audience
- to evaluate and be adaptable
- to promote opportunities
- to offer advice to the association at large
- to be tolerant and open
- to operate in partnership with others.

## **2. Network - WORKING METHODS**

*By Radu Stingbe, Director, Youth Programme, European Scout Region*

### **2.1 Introduction**

Having the benefits of a great 'pool' of resources, flexibility and effectiveness, organising a network seems to be one of the most popular working methods in modern organisational life.

Of course, there are many ways of starting and managing a network, each of them with advantages and disadvantages, a different approach, 'life' and role of the manager (being it a person or an organisational structure).

### **2.2 Formal Networks**

#### **1 - Functional Network**

Reunites commissioners of a certain level, responsible for a certain area or having a certain function in the Association (International, Youth Programme, Training, etc.)

- Organised with the support of the Regional Office as a result of a Conference resolution or at the initiative of the Committee.

#### **2 - Project Network**

Organised at the initiative of the Regional Committee or Office in order to work on a specific project:

- Supported and managed by the Regional Office.
- It's outcome is normally reported to an European Working Group.

### **2.3 Informal Networks**

#### **1 - Theme Network**

Reunites people from different backgrounds and Associations with an interest in developing Scouting (North-South, Overture, etc.)

- Organised without the support of the Regional Office, totally at the initiative of some Associations or individuals.
- The role of the Regional Office could be to observe, to advice and to support in some aspects.

#### **2 - Project Network**

Reunites people from different Associations, working on a common project (normally, as a result of a European event such as the Forum)

- Organised independently from the Regional Office, it usually has a short life-span, until the project is finished and evaluated.
- Sometimes it becomes an informal network, if the leaders involved wish to continue to work together on some other topics.
- The role of the Office could be to advice and support in some technical aspects (such as setting a community, organise links, etc.)

#### **3 - After-Event Network**

Reunites people having the same interests, sharing the same problems or facing the same challenges – usually after an European event (Seminar, Sub-regional event, etc.)

- Organised without the support of the Regional Office its role is mainly to facilitate sharing and exchanging information.
- The role of the Office could be to advice and provide resources (if requested).

### **3. Setting up and Maintaining a Network**

*By Craig Turpie, Network Co-ordinator of the Poland Network in the UK*

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Poland Network is an informal collection of Leaders, other adults in Scouting and Guiding and a small number of youth members from the United Kingdom who have been to Poland with Scouts or Guides. They have had such a positive experience that they are keen to ensure that other youth members do not miss out on the opportunities to interact with Scouting and Guiding in Poland.

#### **3.2 THE EARLY DAYS**

During the early 1990s, Scouting and Guiding in Poland was working towards recognition by the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). The Scout Association in the United Kingdom played a noteworthy role in supporting the dialogue that was geared towards this objective. Recognising the need to engage people with practical experience of the country, especially its Scouting and Guiding. The Scout Association (UK) helped to initiate a broad network of individuals to assist in this task.

This broad network first met at a meeting in 1995 where all interested parties could attend, with no commitment to take forward any actions arising from it. This first meeting provided an opportune platform for those with links to learn what processes were in place to help Scouting and Guiding in Poland to achieve its goal of recognition. In addition to this, it provided a practical opportunity for those gathered to share good practice concerning establishing links with Scouting and Guiding in Poland as well as helping to influence and become actively involved in the dialogue regarding recognition.

Several key outcomes arose from this first meeting. These were:

- That there was a wealth of local expertise across the United Kingdom regarding links and relationships with Scouting and Guiding in Poland that when networked together, could provide critical mass and energy to take specific initiatives forward
- That a broad-based network of individuals could:
  - Share good-practice from practical experience of visits and exchanges to and with Poland. This could be achieved through:
    - Network meetings
    - Network newsletters
    - Study visits
  - Encourage others to seek out the opportunities that the country and its Scouting and Guiding hold;
  - Influence and input into the dialogue regarding the recognition process.

At this early stage, the Poland Network's aim was to help ensure that Polish Scouting and Guiding was best placed to make the transition to a point where recognition by both WOSM and WAGGGS was achievable. It endeavoured to realise this aim by continuing to provide locally organised exchanges and expeditions through its members and by co-ordinating national initiatives that would symbolise the relationship between the United Kingdom and Poland, with the underlying ambition of helping to move towards recognition.

### **3.3 CORNERSTONE ACTIVITIES**

Sharing of knowledge through participation in study visits; conferences and training experiences formed the cornerstone of the Poland Network's activities for the first eighteen months. In 1995 it was agreed by all parties that a bi-lateral initiative to promote exchange activity would help the recognition process. Throughout 1995 and 1996 a small team of individuals, drawn from the first network meeting and with assistance from the Headquarters of all organisations involved in the United Kingdom and Poland, formulated a project entitled Polish Partners. During the summer of 1996, over 400 Scouts and Guides from the United Kingdom participated in summer camp and expedition programmes with Polish Scouts and Guides. During 1997, the Polish participants travelled to the United Kingdom and participated in similar activities. The legacy from this initial centrally organised initiative is that many of the friendships that were created then, continue and flourish to this day.

### **3.4 RE-DEFINING THE AIM**

Just prior to the realisation of the Polish Partners '96 project, Polish Scouting and Guiding (ZHP), regained admission to WOSM and WAGGGS. With the original aim having been achieved, the network had to consider some important questions. These included:

- a. "Now that the aim has been achieved, is there any need for a network to continue?"*
- b. If not, how do we channel the enthusiasm, commitment, specialist knowledge and offers of support that have arisen?"*
- c. If we do continue, would it be sensible to redefine our aim and consider what future work could be undertaken?"*

Answers to these questions were identified quickly. It was agreed that it was appropriate for the network to continue, albeit with a different aim, and that its future work should relate as much to the development of international opportunities for Scouts and Guides in the United Kingdom as for those in Poland. There was a need to ensure that the process was also an opportunity for exchanging knowledge between both countries and that the idea of the United Kingdom directly supporting the development of Scouting and Guiding Poland would not be particularly helpful. From this stage forward, both partners in the relationship were regarded as equals; both benefiting from recognition by the appropriate World bodies.

### **3.5 THE NEW AIM**

The Poland Network redefined its aim as a platform for promoting opportunities for exchanges and link activities with Scouting and Guiding in Poland. Members of the network gather together at least twice a year to consider how to best encourage others to initiate contact and develop exchange projects with Scouting and Guiding in Poland. This can involve the network organising, running and evaluating its own centrally supported projects including bespoke expeditions, contingents to Jamborees and other large events as well study visits.

In addition to initiatives of this nature, the ongoing provision of support and guidance for groups planning visits to Poland continues. It is possible to provide significant advice and ideas based on past experience. For those who seek advice from the network, and then use it to organise their activities with Poland, they too can add to the ongoing life of the network by continuing their interests in the country and its people through the network's activities.

### 3.6 HOW THE POLAND NETWORK IS ORGANISED

The network is informal and operates using informal methods. It relies heavily on electronic communication, using email and the web to help in realising its aim. Key features of the Network's organisation include:

- **Network Co-ordinator**

The role of the Network Co-ordinator is primarily one of relationship management. It is important to recognise that many of the adults that have an expressed interest in the aim and activities of the network also have local commitments, for example, running Cub Scout Packs or assisting with Scout Troops. It is important that these primary roles are recognised. The relationship management takes several forms:

- Identifying and utilising the skills and knowledge of network members
- Chairing meetings of the Poland Network
- Managing the network from the 'centre'
- Providing opportunities for network members to share knowledge and motivate others
- Providing opportunities to develop strategic initiatives that will help achieve the aim
- Advising others of the success and challenges of the network

- **Network Newsletter**

The Network produces an irregular newsletter, as and when there is news to share or information to provide. The newsletter is made available on-line and is emailed to recipients as a way of keeping costs down.

- **Network Web site**

The web site fulfils the function of the network's key communication and distribution channel. Through the web-site individuals can:

- Explore and register an interest in the different projects that the Poland Network is organising
- Learn more about Poland, Polish culture, traditions and history as well as background information relating to Polish Scouting and Guiding
- Access news and other information from around the network
- Be informed of how the Poland Network is organised; with the ability to review notes from past meetings

- **Scout and Guide Membership**

Given the historical nature of the network, it has encompassed membership from both Scouting and Guiding in the United Kingdom. This continues to this day, and is a good example of both organisations working towards a common goal.

- **Wide Geographic Network**

The network's membership is spread right across the United Kingdom. This is particularly useful when responding to requests for support from different corners of the country.

### 3.7 OUR SUCCESSES

Since 1995 the Poland Network has supported over 1,500 Scouts and Guides from the United Kingdom who have chosen to travel to Poland. This has been achieved directly through organised activities and indirectly through provision of information and study visits for Leaders. It can be suggested that this level of activity would have occurred anyway, but another important aspect of the network's activities is its dedication to ensuring that international experiences are of the highest quality. The network has provided and can continue to contribute to high quality international experiences through provision of sharing knowledge and fully utilising the energy and commitment of its members.

## **4. The Outcomes of Networking**

*by David McKee, International Manager, The Scout Association (UK), (using the informal North-South Network of the European Region as a working example.)*

### **4.1 BACKGROUND**

The Informal North-South Network has its origins in meetings between some European Scout and Guides Associations and their counterparts in the Africa Region at the end of the 1980s. Building on partnerships which had developed between those chiefly French speaking Associations, the Kigali Charter was developed. Development of the network occurred because of personal contacts and today some 20 European Associations meet on a regular basis, twice yearly.

### **4.2 CONSTRAINTS**

The network depends heavily on the regular meetings. In order to justify the expenditure of travel around Europe, Associations are increasingly asking for identifiable results – positive outcomes from the meetings. The focus of the network is confirmed as primarily the relationships between European and African Associations, but there is also interest in relationships with Latin-America.

### **4.3 OUTCOMES**

#### **Kigali Charter**

Perhaps the single most important outcome from the network was the development of the Kigali Charter, a document which sought to set out the principles of co-operation between Scout and Guide Associations with their African counterparts.

#### **Marrakech Charter**

While the network cannot claim ownership of the charter, the natural development of the Kigali Charter was to extend the range and scope of the principles for co-operation to the various relationships which are entered into by Scouting. These can be between the North (the developed world), South (the less developed world), relationships within Europe (particularly since the dramatic political changes of the early 1990), other inter and intra-regional relationships, and with outside organisations and agencies.

The network continues to seek ways to enhance the implementation of the charter through the development of tools and sharing information on how individual Associations use the charter to inform and influence their work.

#### **Mutual support**

It is recognised that many Association representatives act in relative isolation as they seek to develop effective partnerships with other parts of the world. The network offers a forum for support and encouragement which is focussed and personal.

#### **Multi-lateral partnerships**

Of particular note is the co-ordination of work to support Scouting and Guiding in the area of the 'Grands Lacs' in central Africa. A number of European Associations share information and working methods as part of the network meetings. On occasion, representatives from Rwanda and Burundi have taken part in the network meetings.

#### **The establishment of the Overtures Network**

The close connection between intercultural learning, cultural awareness and development education meant that a sub group of the network has grown to become a network in its own right, addressing the problems of minority ethnic communities,

immigrants and refugees. Both networks meet at the same venue over the same weekend so that areas of common interest can be explored.

### **Inter-Regional Support**

Closer connection with the Africa Regional Office (WOSM) and the Africa Executive for WAGGGS has resulted through the participation of the Regional Director (WOSM) and the Regional Executive (WAGGGS). The potential for further co-operation is enhanced by representation from the European Scout and Guide Committees. Lately, a presentation on the 10 year plan for African Scouting has encouraged closer co-ordination and focussing of support for Scouting in Africa.

### **Exchange of information**

Associations are encouraged to share information on their particular projects so that pitfalls can be avoided or lessened. Valuable contacts can be shared, successes can be supported and problems can be solved by sharing solutions.

### **Contributions to World Events**

The network is a useful forum where Associations can be encouraged to contribute to such programme concepts as the Global Development Villages in World Scout Jamborees. This has led to further dissemination of development education materials to regional and national events, with the knock-on influence on youth programme at local level.

### **Inter-cultural learning**

Understanding the cultural differences between Europe and Africa can be difficult. Working within the network, one can see that even within Europe there are enormous cultural differences and the network helps its members to work together to understand better some of these cultural differences. This provides a better basis for preparing to encounter and work in the inter-cultural environment of a North-South partnership.

### **Acknowledging different working methods**

At each meeting, the host Association presents their own particular partnership projects. This enables them to share the strategic priorities of their Association vis a vis their relationships with the South. In particular, it is useful to see the differences – especially where some Associations have stronger nationally co-ordinated projects and others will encourage locally based projects.

### **Training and preparation**

The network enables Associations to share information on how groups/individuals prepare themselves for their projects and visits. This helps to ensure a more fulfilling programme experience for our members and effective and sensitive interaction with their partner groups.

## **4.4 SOME DIFFICULTIES**

- ◆ The informal nature of the network means that there is often a lack of continuity between meetings.
- ◆ The need to justify expenditure to attend meetings has meant more focussed agendas, but this makes the informal interchange more difficult due to constraints of time.
- ◆ The network was not successful in identifying an effective way of accessing European Funds. Many members were part of Indaba, an attempt to create a pan-European agency to access funds.
- ◆ The network does not encompass all of Europe – there are no Central or Eastern European participants.
- ◆ There is insufficient use of networking between meetings.

## **4.5 SUMMARY**

The Informal North-South Network has contributed significantly to the development of World and national strategies concerning partnerships in Scouting (and Guiding) especially between Africa and Europe. Despite budgetary constraints and a greater need for tangible, measurable results, the informal discussions and exchanges of information encourage participants to further develop their partnerships. Sharing is the key to our work and extending the effectiveness of Scouting and Guiding's work in and for the community is the measurable outcome.

Subscribe to the network's newsgroup to contribute to the development of the network and to receive information on past and future meetings.  
NorthSouthNetwork-subscribe@yahogroups.com