

On 11 July 2018 the European Committee announced on its web site that it cancelled its Annual Meeting. Click here to read the announcement: <http://acawsoec.com/cancellation-notice/>

It later conducted its own inventory on what led to this cancellation with a view to learn lessons and prevent repeating mistakes in future. Below is an analysis of that inventory which was shared with European Committee Country Representatives on 13 August 2013 on the European Committee channel on Slack. (Slack is an online platform where the WSO does committee work).

Why we cancelled our Annual Meeting this year

Some European Committee (EC) country representatives have requested further understanding as to why we canceled our European Meeting this year, and we said this would come in due course. We now present those reasons.

What is written here reflects only the EC's perspective, and we recognize that any communication has at least two viewpoints. The intent is not to point fingers or assign blame, but rather to give a fuller understanding of what influenced our decision-making.

This was a difficult decision, one that was not taken lightly. In previous years, the European Meetings have been a wonderful opportunity to bring ACAs together from different European countries, and for the EC to meet with and provide support to national Intergroups. Since it was understood that our main point of contact was a longtime member of the UK Intergroup, and because there is a strong ACA program in the UK, the EC welcomed the chance to work with the UK intergroup for this year's event.

The EC chose the theme of Unity for the September event to remind everyone how interconnected we are, even if we don't all speak the same language.

It seems fair to say that both the EC and our counterpart in the UK have acknowledged a number of communication differences. Several event planning conversations devoted extensive time to clarifying the purpose of the event, especially reiterating to our counterpart that this was not a WSO Annual Business Conference (ABC) nor an AWC (ACA World Convention). Despite planning delays, the EC remained confident that the Twelfth Tradition's emphasis on "principles before personalities" would guide everyone to a fruitful outcome.

By June, the EC had growing concerns that the host committee had not presented to us a solid, identified team of volunteers, with individuals or groups dedicated to handling the details for things like programming, budget, food and meeting logistics. Heightening our concerns, only a partial event program had been delivered, and the EC was informed that, at that time, the UK Intergroup had no role in planning or hosting this annual European Meeting.

In early July, our counterpart in the UK sent an email expressing displeasure with the level of communication from the EC. She said she wasn't getting the information she needed, and we weren't getting the information we needed to feel comfortable going forward. Things seemed to be at an impasse and time was running out to make a decision on whether to proceed or not. Given the cost of travel and the time commitment required for many who would be attending the EC's annual meeting, the EC informed the WSO board that it was reluctant to proceed with the event while there were so many unresolved organizational questions. The Board agreed with the EC's assessment that we had no choice but to cancel. This was the first cancellation of our annual European Meeting, and the feeling of disappointment was intense for us.

Some UK volunteers have pressed forward with plans to hold a recovery event on the same dates and in the same facility that had been chosen for the EC annual meeting. As we do with all ACA recovery events in European countries, we are supporting this event by publishing information about it on the EC Website.

Since the cancellation, the European Committee has engaged in extensive inventory of what happened this year to prevent any future repeats. Some early conclusions are:

1) Shared vision – It may seem obvious, but both parties need to clearly understand and agree at the outset, to the purpose of the event along with its theme and program objectives.

2) Service Structure Commitment - As a national event, the European Meeting should be fully endorsed and actively supported by the national Intergroup (IG) for the host country, when such a body exists. This is also an opportunity to have a closer working relationship between the national host IG and the EC. So all members of both executive committees (for the IG and the EC) should be clearly identified and known to both parties, with contact information, and be actively engaged in realizing this event.

3) Planning Commitment – The axiom “proper planning prevents poor performance” holds true for any organization, especially one made up of volunteers. But it is especially true for events like this which are trying to achieve maximum benefit at minimum cost. For this reason, very detailed plans need to be created, to ensure that the event runs smoothly and is not chaotic or stressful. It is therefore crucial that all parties accept best practices for event management and not leave such things excessively to chance or a higher power.

4) Volunteer Commitment – Because larger events involve more logistics and planning, it is easier for several volunteers to each be responsible for a separate portion of the overall event plan (i.e. catering, room set-up, program, budget, communications, etc.). Volunteers need to participate in planning phone calls and finalize plans in a timely manner so that planning deadlines can be met.

The European Committee annual meeting is a major event that European ACA’s have come to count on. The EC again wishes to express our profound disappointment that it won’t be held this year. We commit to all our member countries that we will work with local partners to make sure the annual meeting is a successful and joyful part of our recovery calendar in the years to come.

The European Committee

<http://acawsoec.com/contact/>