

## **Baltic Summer Supervision Quality Day: August 17, 2018, in Riga**

Coincidence or not?: This year the Baltic States are celebrating 100 years of independence... so Tallinn, Vilnius and Riga are partying.....and...:

This year, for the first time, the Latvian Organization of Supervision organized a conference day, in Riga, for supervisors from Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. The announcement was 'picked up' by the CIC (Commission of International Contacts LVSC in the Netherlands): we want to join in!

Contact was quickly and easily made—many supervisors/coaches from the Baltic States are loyal participants in the ANSE Summer Universities; connections were also developed during the Grundtvig project (2008-2010) and, in my case, when I joined an international intervention group. Through an email I discovered that the conference was open to other European supervisors/coaches: besides participants from the Netherlands, a supervisor from Germany planned to attend and Wolfgang Knopf (former president of ANSE) from Austria, would deliver the keynote speech.

A sunny day and one of the buildings of the beautifully renovated Ministry of Justice in Riga set the stage for this well-attended and well-organized day.

There were 57 supervisors from the Baltics; 3 from other European countries. It was clear from the beginning that English would be the language of choice in this conference as, although many speak fluent Russian, our colleagues from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania each have their own language.

Riga is a 'noisy' city....a comparison with the group of supervisors present was quickly made: everyone was so happy about this meeting. Ilse Dreifelde (President, Supervision Organization, Latvia) delivered a welcome speech that was immediately translated into English—the key-note and workshop that followed, were conducted entirely in English.

There are 3 educations for supervision in Latvia—a considerable amount for a country with not even 2 million inhabitants (1.9 million). A total of 93 supervisors have graduated and become members of the National Organization. Others, having graduated several years ago, studied in Tallinn, Estonia. Aachim Fritsche from Germany was their teacher.

In Lithuania (2.8 million inhabitants) the education for supervision was also established by German teachers. Less supervisors there: 60, but the education and National Organization is growing.

In Estonia (1.3 million inhabitants) the education for supervision, organized by Estonians, was established only a few years ago. The country now has 110 supervisors in their National Organization.

Because they share a similar 'historica' background, the Baltic countries often look to work with one another. This is evidenced, in several projects, by a communal gathering of experience and exchange of knowledge, eg: a Latvian and a Lituianian instructor together teach a supervision course in East Ukraine; both speak fluent Russian.

## **'Quality is not an act, it's a habit' (Aristotle)**

Due to the increasing popularity of supervision, and the growing number of qualified supervisors in the Baltics, this year Latvia took the initiative to organize this special day of discussion and workshops called: Quality in Supervision.

By introducing 5 topics in his keynote speech: education, theory, practice, research and development, professional associations, Wolfgang Knopf gave an overview and personal impression of how supervision could develop in the future in Europe regarding supervising/coaching organizations.

He emphasized qualified programs for trainers and the importance of good communication—not only is the content important, but also **how** that content is delivered and **what** the reaction to that content is. His thesis: communication is the basic process for our job.

It is important in these years for organizations never to lose sight of our core-business—to keep on seeing teams as a system. Knopf referred to the views of Edgar Schein (1980) who described the structure of organizations and their change. From the point of view that organization-culture is an abstract idea, Schein wondered why there are so many differences in coping with each other within organizations. (more information:

<https://www.managementboek.nl/boek/9789055941872/de-bedrijfscultuur-als-ziel-van-de-onderneming-edgar-schein>).

Modelling behaviour is important In an organization willing to change the culture—also conceptions, status and nominations, the so-called 'direct working mechanisms'. These influence the culture of the organization in a direct way. Indirect mechanisms do not have direct influence on the culture of the organization but are regulating: the mission, vision, house-style, rituals and design.

*In the afternoon a topic was suggested in the workshop about kernquadrants, by our Lithuanian colleague, Zilvinas Gailius: do organizations have feelings or emotions? An interesting discussion but without answers.....*

Knopf pleaded for the importance of attention for the triangle: work, supervisee and organization. This is both an important and well-known segment in the education of supervisors in the Dutch model for supervision. In closing, he emphasized the need to see supervision as a 'room for space': a free room for the supervisee to see (and reflect on) his work from a certain distance. And: the supervisor should always be able to contain the 'shit' the supervisee wants to share (Bion 1962).

Summing up: Knopf gave some recommendations when considering supervising organizations:

Recognition of organizational structures and dynamics

Being curious without fear of unknown and unexpected dynamics

Being skeptical to well known dynamics

Mistrust first diagnosis and first impressions

Understand communication as double contingency

A case shows a problem and hides it at the same time (Wellingdorf)

### **Metaphors and Workshops**

After the keynote there was space in small groups to work with metaphors in talking about quality in supervision. The question was raised: what is your experience with a moment of quality as a supervisor?

In my group it was clear that giving space to the supervisee was seen as very important to this matter of quality. As a supervisor you should 'escape' the certainty of methods and theory at times—be there with only your 'active presence'. Then the supervisee could get the feeling of being in a free zone and become aware of, for example, the choices he or she makes. For the supervisor it is a matter of: do nothing, work hard (in the head).

It was good to discover that in whatever country or language you do your sessions, some experiences of quality have similarities. Borders are gone...a good example of the level where we, as European supervisors, can understand one another when it comes to exchanging the work—how often we think the same.

Could this be the direct result of the 'indirect mechanisms' of ANSE (mission, vision, house-style, rituals and design) when we think of the theory of Schein (see above)?

(Not a coincidence: the first ANSE Journal 2017 had the topic of Quality....see: [www.anse.eu](http://www.anse.eu))

Personally, I think this part of the day was the most impressive. A certain confidential atmosphere was noticeable as we talked about our work. 'It is the way intervention can be'....said a participant at the end of this session....and he thanked us. A moving moment.

I joined another workshop that was perfectly directed by the young supervisor from Estonia: Anne Randväli—interesting to me because the 'young' generation of professional supervisors truly had a voice in this workshop. The workshop was led in a very professional way—Anne was able to work with the various participants who all had individual expectations for this workshop. She established good structure in the beginning so we could quickly reach a consensus about how to work. A very good example of handling group dynamics!

The method of empathy mapping was new to me. For information in English on this topic: <https://medium.com/swlh/what-is-an-empathy-map-and-why-is-it-valuable-for-your-business-14236be4fdf4>

An excellent opportunity to work together was provided to a small group of supervisors from 4 different countries: we were 'under the skin' of a new supervisee (from 2 different countries) suggesting words for feelings and thoughts. A very good, but difficult, exercise for supervisors—attempting to ignore your own thoughts and prejudices, putting them on hold.....worth trying. After this experience, I again realized that it makes no difference in what country your education as a supervisor takes place....common thinking develops over borders.

The day closed with a panel discussion, highlighting topics introduced by the six countries present. It was then time for a boat tour on the Gaudava River which splits the city of Riga into two parts.

As colleagues we ended our interesting conference day, enjoying drinks and delicious appetizers, under a stunning and brilliant golden sunset. Then one day later Riga treated us with SUPER fireworks to celebrate 100 years of independence. A beautiful final chord!

To the readers of this article: joining an international supervision group will undoubtedly give you some great new experiences with colleagues! You are invited to join an IIG (see ANSEwebsite).

Please check out sites of other organisations of Supervision.... text is mostly available in English. See: [www.ANSE.eu](http://www.ANSE.eu)

Estonia: [www.supervision.ee](http://www.supervision.ee)

Lithuania: [www.supervizija.lt](http://www.supervizija.lt)

Latvia: <http://www.supervizija.lv>

The Netherlands: [www.lvsc.eu](http://www.lvsc.eu)

Germany: <http://www.dgsv.de>

Austria: <https://www.oevs.or.at/>

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