

## **Members' Forums:**

### **Working group "Initiative for the future and further development of members' forums at an international level"**

For decades, important topics related to the Anthroposophical Society have been brought to the Annual General Meetings of the General Anthroposophical Society (GAS) through motions and thereby have been dealt with in the legal sphere. Anyone who has regularly taken part in such meetings will have felt how, in such a context, the topics could never really be adequately considered and discussed – also due to the lack of time – in such a way that a sufficient ground for judgment could be reached for voting. The members' forums that developed in Dornach after the 2023 Annual General Meeting can be seen as a start and as a healthy step forward in this sense.

For years, there have also been considerations regarding how members of the Society worldwide could be included in the voting process, since many members are not able to travel to Dornach. However, an integration of members worldwide solely for the purpose of voting, in a purely virtual form, without sufficient information and an adequate exchange, is not an optimal solution for the issue we are trying to address.

**A working group of members from various countries** has now been formed with the initiative to create members' forums worldwide.

#### **Aims of the initiative:**

- To create a suitable space for the free spiritual life in the General Anthroposophical Society in which all relevant topics can be dealt with worldwide, and thus to enter into a process that enables us to develop well-founded judgments and also action-oriented approaches.
- Through the forums, to involve the periphery in a process in which topics related to the Society are dealt with. And, in this way, to connect the periphery with the center and the center with the periphery in a way that goes beyond just the Annual General Meetings.
- The relevant topics for the forums would also include those topics that concern not just the Society but the Anthroposophical Movement. In this way, the Anthroposophical Movement would be involved, with the intention of working towards its integration into the Anthroposophical Society.

On the one hand, we are designing a viable process that can enable this exchange, based on the international cooperation that has already begun. On the other hand, we are collecting topics that are in urgent need of global exchange.

Everyone is welcome to make suggestions and to participate regularly!

For the initiative:

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## Concept for the development of worldwide member forums

### Aim of the initiative

- To create a suitable space for the free spiritual life in the General Anthroposophical Society (GAS) in which all relevant topics can be dealt with worldwide, and thus to enter into a process that enables us to develop well-founded judgments and also action-oriented approaches.
- Through the forums, to involve the periphery in a process in which topics related to the Society are dealt with. And, in this way, to connect the periphery with the center and the center with the periphery in a way that goes beyond just the Annual General Meetings (AGM).
- The relevant topics for the forums would also include those topics that concern not just the Society but the Anthroposophical Movement. In this way, the Anthroposophical Movement would be involved, with the intention of working towards its integration into the Anthroposophical Society.

### Why?

The Anthroposophical Society has a space where the entire membership is invited to participate once a year. This is the Annual General Meetings of the GAS. At this meeting the Vorstand informs the members of its activities and decisions. Sometimes it needs the consent of the members. Members can also put motions which are discussed and put to a vote. If they obtain a majority the motion is carried.

The frame of this general assembly is a legal frame, fully in line with a conventional association. This is also reflected in the currently valid statute which, as many members will know, is not the statute conceived by Rudolf Steiner for the Anthroposophical Society on the Christmas conference, but a statute from the building association (Bauverein) which on February 8 in 1925 took the name of “General Anthroposophical Society”.

Point 1 of the current statute:	Point 1 of the Christmas Conference Statute:
<i>1. Under the name 'Allgemeine Anthroposophische Gesellschaft' is to be found an association in accordance with Article 60ff. of the Swiss Civil Code, with its headquarters in Dornach, Switzerland. This association (hereinafter called the Society) has been listed in the Business Register according to Article 61 of the Swiss Civil Code.</i>	<i>1. The Anthroposophical Society is to be an association of people whose will is to nurture the life of the soul, both in the individual and in human society, on the basis of a true knowledge of the spiritual world.</i>

<https://www.goetheanum.org/en/members/the-statutes>

<https://www.goetheanum.org/en/members/foundation-statute-of-1923>

This purely legal frame has shown itself to be neither appropriate nor worthy of dealing with the many issues that the Anthroposophical Society needs to address today. There is never really time for discussion of the issues, and since the AGM usually has to deal with complex and urgent issues, the

atmosphere at such meetings is full of tensions, and latent conflicts explode, or new ones emerge. Voting and the achievement of a majority in this situation can thus transform into a tool of power – the power of majority– and is not an agreement in which wills spiritually converge. If instead of bringing motions to these assemblies, members bring concerns or other important issues that do not require a vote, or cannot be voted on –and these are the issues in realm of the free spiritual life– the experience is that they are generally not taken so seriously and there is no time to enter into a proper debate about them anyway.

Many members have stopped coming to these assemblies where, due to the inappropriate frameworks, the best ground is provided for doubles to unfold.

There are a lot of members that miss having a space for the free spiritual life in the General Anthroposophical Society, where all relevant issues can be dealt with at the right level, worldwide. The Members Forums that began after the 2023 AGM can be seen as a start and as a healing process. They opened up new opportunities for dialogue, with members and leaders being able to discuss over several months the most diverse topics that would otherwise have been ‘ticked off’ after a few hours at the last AGM, and with what consequences?

Based on this positive development, this initiative wants to build on what already exists and go one step further:

1. **To create forums on a worldwide level** to deal with all relevant issues, regardless of the issue being brought to vote in the form of a motion at the AGM.

What are these issues? Some examples:

-Questions about the constitution of the Anthroposophical Society

-What do the facts that the anthroposophical movement is much bigger than the Society shows us? Why is the society not very attractive for young people? What task do we have towards young generation?

-Why Rudolf Steiner saw very necessary to have an anthroposophical society? And what kind of society does the Anthroposophical Movement need today?

-How is the anthroposophical substance fostered and promoted today in the GAS and how does it live in its institutions and trainings?

-What is the situation of the GAS today concerning the representation of Anthroposophy in public, both in general and specifically in relation to burning issues of our time?

## 2. **Include the periphery in the processes**

There has been frequent discussion about making it possible for members on the periphery to vote at general assemblies even if they are not present. This well-intentioned approach has in the present situation many disadvantages. On the one hand, the periphery is usually not sufficiently informed about the issues that are dealt with in the general meetings in Dornach. On the other hand, a virtual participation is not the same as a real one, and there are also, among others, many problems with regard to security, which is not topic in this context.

We think that a real integration of the periphery does not take place simply by allowing members in the periphery to vote virtually, but by integrating them into the processes that lead to the proposals of solutions before any voting takes place, so that in this process the periphery can also have a voice.

### **3. Possibility for every member to join**

So far, the development of the Society has been very centrally oriented and the periphery has sent its representatives to Dornach. But country representatives cannot be expected to be able to represent the range of differences that exist among the membership, specially in the present world situation.

Today the participation of each individual is of increasing value. Creating forums at the worldwide level would allow members from the periphery to actively participate and raise the issues that are relevant in the periphery.

### **4. Breathing between center and periphery**

Every living organism has a center and a periphery. When the center perceives the periphery and the periphery knows what happens in the center, the society develops to a healthy organism. This would make possible a common consciousness in the society. That what is worked on in the countries, would reflect in the consciousness of the society as a whole.

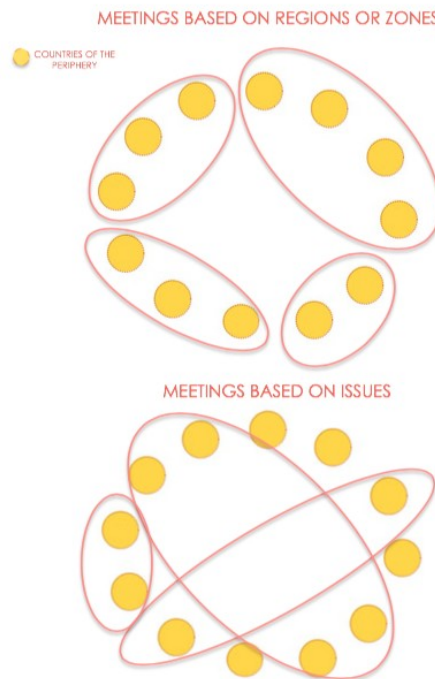
### **5. Integrate the Anthroposophical Movement (AM)**

There are also many people active in the AM that still don't have developed an interest in the society. In the relevant topics to be dealt with in the forums, would also be included those concerning the Anthroposophical Movement. In this way the Anthroposophical Movement would be involved, with the intention of working towards its integration in the Anthroposophical Society.

### **What would it look like in practice?**

- **Each country organizes itself** in the way it considers possible and most appropriate. We want to invite the members, societies and branches in the countries to organize their meetings. Meetings at country level can take place in person or virtually depending on the possibilities and willingness of the members. At the same time, in each country there are already groups or branches that meet in presence, where the topics can be discussed. We think that we should pursue real human and not only virtual meetings.

- **The countries can also then meet according to zones or regions depending on the language or interest.** Zones can arise on the basis of language, or also if different countries have a common interest for one topic.



- The current communication organ of the society (**Anthroposophy Worldwide**) provides a space where members can make their contributions in relation to the work in the forums.
- The **themes of the forums** are the themes that have been dealt with in the general assembly, as well as the themes that the periphery decides to deal with. It would be desirable that both, the centre and the periphery, converge on some important issues, so that they are dealt with at a worldwide level.
- **One year process for integration and taken decisions:** Communication and interaction need time if a society worldwide should be integrated. Therefore the idea is that a discussion process can be started at the AGM and decisions will be taken at the AGM one year later.
- **At least once a year a meeting takes place in Dornach** where there is a possibility to meet in presence, bring proposals and take decisions. We propose that this space will be the AGM of the General Anthroposophical Society, if this AGM would abandon the narrow legal frames and makes space, beyond the legal (motions), to include that what was worked worldwide in the forums.

- **The countries in the periphery hold their general meetings before the AGM in Dornach:** We propose that Dornach should announce one year in advance when the AGM of the following year will take place, so that the countries can hold their general meeting before the one in Dornach. In this way the countries will not just talk about what happened in Dornach, but will discuss the topics to be taken to Dornach. In this way was also conceived at the Christmas Conference 1923/24.

For the initiative:

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See also: <https://www.anthroposophie.org/en/news/members-forums-initiative-for-future-forums>