

The Emergence of the European Region By Dorothy Haley (Great Britain)

The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International was founded in the United States of America in 1929, to promote professional and personal growth of women educators and excellence in education. It rapidly became of immense value to women in the teaching profession, at a time when we were fighting for equal recognition in our profession, and consequently it expanded throughout the different states of North America and further north into Canada.

With the whole of North America conquered, one would expect it to expand into other areas where women might value the outstanding professional activities and cultural development which it offered. Europe was an obvious choice for expansion and in 1971 Norway became the first European State to be initiated, followed by Finland, Sweden, The Netherlands, Iceland, and Great Britain in 1977. Each new state was sponsored by a state or region in the USA, offering both friendship and often financial and organisational support. Great Britain was supported financially and spiritually by Georgia in the South East Region of the USA, and even after 30 years this friendship is still treasured.

The Society holds international conventions in the USA every two years, and with their vitality, enthusiasm, and amazing interchange of educational ideas, they reinforce the vital importance of our Society. Sadly, however, the great expense of travel in order to attend these meetings meant that few Europeans could reap the full advantage of the society. To overcome this it was felt that if we could meet on alternate years, to hold a Regional Conference in Europe, where we could discuss matters of specific importance to European Educators, not only would we benefit, but the whole society would become aware of trends and thoughts in education beyond the shores of America. The different languages and educational systems of European States would no longer be a barrier to communication.

With considerable daring Great Britain took the initiative in 1989 to invite all European members, and also Americans to meet together in Canterbury for a sample 'European Meeting'. With 175 Europeans and 125 Americans and Canadians it was immediately obvious that this could be of immense value to European members. Once again in Canterbury, four years later, it was decided that we should put before the whole society, the immense value of organising a European Region, still under the umbrella of the whole society and its rules and regulations.

Only two years later, in 1996, this was voted on and finally approved by the State Presidents of all states within Delta Kappa Gamma. It was an immensely brave decision, and Europe appreciates the great confidence placed in it – for we now have a European Conference biannually in one of our European cities, where over 200 of us can discuss and understand all the interests and problems of our various educational programmes. This has also resulted in greater expansion, into Germany, Denmark and Estonia, and has enhanced our knowledge of European neighbours as we hold our conferences in some of the great cities of Europe – yet, if we can afford it, (and school holiday dates match), we still attend the International Conventions where we are valued, and still retain great feelings of international friendship.

Meanwhile DKG continues to widen its horizons by taking greater responsibility for education in countries where help is desperately needed, and has considerable influence in the United Nations and other world-wide associations.