

On the History of EGATIN

Zoe Voyatzaki

Twenty years ago, the first notion of a network of group-analytic institutions from many different countries was put forth. As time has shown, this has been a fruitful idea and thus came the thought; to write an account of the formative years of EGATIN and how it all started- with the idea of combining the more concrete historical facts with what we call ‘myths’ – the often untold stories which are true, but are not given importance while they are happening, the small things which however give us the true flavor of history and complement reason.

Key words: EGATIN, group-analytic institutions, IGA (Institute of Group Analysis)

London, European training network, delegates

Introduction

The idea of a network of group-analytic institutions from different countries certainly seems to have been in Foulkes’s thinking from the very beginning.

The eventual aim has always been an international association of group analysts.

(Foulkes, 1975: Editorial)

Let us start by going back, in time ... The decade of the 1970s marked a slow but stable growth of group-analytic centres outside England, in ‘continental Europe’, as my English friends usually say! The agents of this change were mainly the non-English graduates of The Institute of Group Analysis (I.G.A.) who, following the completion of their training, returned to their home countries and promoted group-analytic practice.

Thus a gradual shift in the scheme of one metropolitan centre of group analysis (i.e. London) and the 'periphery' was effected. The periphery was growing and became a mainland; a development paying tribute to the effectiveness of the group-analytic model and to the stable basis the 'mother' Institute and Society provided from London, by being a source of knowledge, experience and support.

As the number of new group-analytic training organizations throughout Europe started growing, the great diversity in requirements and practices between them became evident. The need for communication, for exchange of information and of course for the upholding and safeguarding high standards in group-analytic training was becoming more and more pronounced.

In this *Zeitgeist* or 'Esprit du Temps' the beginnings of EGATIN were laid.

The first, public discussion of a European training network took place at a meeting of European colleagues interested in group-analytic training, in Zagreb in 1984, following the initiative and the proposal of Yannis K. Tsegos, who was then a member of European Working Party (E.W.P.) of the Group-Analytic Society.

In that meeting Yannis set forth and described his idea and set it open for discussion. I should mention here that as I know from our own discussions with him, the first time the network notion occurred to him was during the European Working Party meeting which took place in Düsseldorf, in Ursula Husemann's * home. And indeed then at first everyone, including the English members agreed to it. A bit later though, they had second thoughts and withdrew their support, so the network could not be put forward as an E.W.P. project.

* A german group-analyst - unfortunately now deceased.

The Underground Phase

Many informal discussions took place around that time, with Yannis Tsegos trying to support and promote his idea and to convince people that this was not an act against the Society or I.G.A. (London) but an outgrowth, continuation and expansion of the group-analytic spirit. I think one such meeting took place in London, in Selfridges' underground café with Werner Knauss. So I like to characterize that period in EGATIN's development as 'The Underground Phase'!

Continuing on from the Zagreb meeting, the response to the proposal was mixed. On the one hand there was a lot of enthusiasm, on the other apprehension and suspicion. I think a very decisive moment was when Malcolm Pines spoke positively about it, as a development which was very group-analytic! After that spirits seemed to relax and the conversation became more productive. Another important point was when it was proposed by Dr. Dennis Brown, then President of the Group-Analytic Society (London) that perhaps the Society could support the new organization financially, because how else would it function . . . Yannis then answered firmly that if the network was going to grow it would have to support itself. If it proved unable to do so, then it might as well not function at all.

In this way things were set in motion and as a result of this initial meeting, a second meeting took place in September of 1986 also in Zagreb, during the 9th International Congress of Group Psychotherapy, and thanks to the cordial arrangements of Dr. Edward Klain.

In the interval between August 1984 and September 1986, a tremendous amount of correspondence took place mainly between I.G.A. Athens, and several other group-analytic institutions in order to collect and exchange more information, and provide clarifications, as well as ameliorate initial impressions related to the suspicion that this

new organization was a splitting and destructive action within the group-analytic movement.

In the process of this 2nd plenary (September 1986), it became obvious that the apprehensive group of colleagues had become much smaller, while the majority of the participants expressed positive and even enthusiastic feelings. This leads us to what I have named the 'Enthusiasm versus Mistrust Phase'.

Enthusiasm Versus Mistrust Phase.

A decisive step in the development of the new network took place then with the formation of the Interim Working Group (I.W.G.) which undertook the task of preparing the formation of the new organization. It consisted of John Schlapobersky from London, Werner Knauss from Heidelberg, Giovanni Duse from Zürich, Yannis K. Tsegos from Athens and Shalom Littman from Jerusalem.

The I.W.G. met the following day in a Zagreb Hotel and decided to set its next meeting the following month, in Heidelberg during the annual Symposium of I.G.A. (Heidelberg). It was also decided that –

- a) arrangements would be made for a larger formal meeting in 1987, to which authorized representatives from each of Europe's training institutions would be invited to attend.
- b) The meeting to follow October's Heidelberg meeting of the Interim Working Group would take place in Athens, where it was suggested that each member of the Group might present a paper at an occasion for which fees would be charged. The purpose of these fees would be to initiate an independent budget out of which, as an initial gesture, funds could be drawn to meet (at least partly) the travel expenses incurred by members of the I.W.G.

Within the five week interval between the first and second I.W.G. meeting an important event took place, when the Council of I.G.A. (London) decided to participate actively in the I.W.G. by appointing its Chairman, Bryan Boswood and John Schlapobersky as the main delegates to the I.W.G.

This decision was greeted by the members of the I.W.G. with enthusiasm and relief, as it signalled the interest and hopefully the acceptance of the idea of a European Network by the ‘mother’ London Institute.

The Heidelberg I.W.G. meeting took place as planned, including besides Bryan Boswood, Rudi Olivieri-Larsson as the main delegate of S.G.A.Z. (Zürich) and the author (Zoe Voyatzaki) as an additional representative of I.G.A. (Athens). We worked on a number of issues and concluded that –

- A. 1) The network would be open to membership by any European institution with a formal membership of five or more qualified members, which had at present or which was aiming at establishing a formal training for group analysts leading to professional accreditation.
- 2) The Interim Working Group would be open to membership by any new delegate of such an institution.
- 3) The network could be joined by any such training institution without regard to the number of such institutions in each country. Membership would thus be *by Institution and not by country*.
- 4) Each member institution could have only one official representative on the I.W.G. but additional members from member institutions could be co-opted.
- 5) Each member institution should have only one official vote in any decisions taken on the I.W.G. by a vote among its members.

- B. Furthermore it was agreed that the essential elements of a well-constituted group-analytic training, should be comprised of personal group analysis, a theoretical curriculum over an extended period of time, and the clinical supervision of group-analytic psychotherapy offered over an extended period.
- C. Finally it was suggested by Yannis Tsegos that future meetings of the I.W.G. should be preceded by a leader-less sensitivity group in the form of an unstructured hour of free-floating discussion.

I think this particular decision was a very important one. I believe that one of the reasons accounting for the extremely rapid and stable development of this organization was the fact that group practices themselves were used to further our goals. These sensitivity meetings really helped us to develop a sense of unity, because in them we had the chance to work on our own mistrust, on our difficulties with the new task and on our differences, cultural, theoretical or otherwise.

Something else I should explain about how our meetings were organized is that the delegates' meetings could be attended by non-delegates, sitting in an outer circle, who could participate in the discussion, but without the right to vote. The open plenaries on the other hand could be attended by anyone, but were conducted (chaired) by people from the local Institute and preferably by one of their qualifying course students. I think this idea came from the training scheme in Athens, which is organized as a training community and where most responsibilities of this type are carried out by the trainees themselves.

The third meeting of the I.W.G. took place, as planned, in Athens, during the 1st European Meeting on Group Analysis (April 1987) organized by the I.G.A. (Athens). During this third I.W.G. meeting, important clarifications about membership both to the I.W.G. and the network as a whole were made, including the following :

- a) membership into the I.W.G. did not necessarily coincide with full membership status in the Network. The I.W.G. would be open to interested representatives of training institutions that would like to offer personal work.
- b) The actual membership of the I.W.G. was stabilised as follows: Yannis K. Tsegos and Zoe Voyatzaki from I.G.A. (Athens), Bryan Boswood and John Schlapobersky from I.G.A. (London), Werner Knauss from I.G.A. (Heidelberg), Rudi Olivieri-Larsson and Giovanni Duse from S.G.A.Z. (Zürich).
- c) Yannis Tsegos would continue being Chairman of the I.W.G. and John Schlapobersky its Secretary; Werner Knauss agreed to stand as Chairman Elect, who would take up office with effect from the Oxford meeting in September. Yannis Tsegos would then continue to serve as a member of the I.W.G.
- d) The new information about selection criteria collected and organized by Werner Knauss through a questionnaire to the 23 training institutions already known to us in Europe, together with the previous information collected by the Athens members of the I.W.G. enabled a further clarification of criteria for institutions to become members of the new organization.

As there was a wide range of training activities going on in different countries, and as some institutions had already established and others only aimed at establishing a group-analytic training, while still others were in between, three categories of membership were proposed – Full, Associate and Affiliate.

Besides the three criteria (i.e.therapy, theory and supervision) decided upon in Heidelberg, as essential to a Foulkesian group-analytic training, the question of a minimal number of necessary qualified graduates had been added, with full membership reserved for those organizations which achieved a certain level in all three areas of Foulkesian training. Final decisions were postponed for the next I.W.G. meeting, in London (during

the May Conference), but a first estimation was made that about ten training institutions would be eligible to full membership – from Denmark, Heidelberg, Athens, Jerusalem, London, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Zürich and Yugoslavia.

Last but not least, one of the purposes of the first European Meeting on Group Analysis in Athens was to raise funds on behalf of the new network. The conference had been organized by the Athens I.G.A. so as to support EGATIN's development by bringing members of the I.W.G. together in Athens, all of whom had presented papers at the Conference.

After meeting the travelling expenses of those from abroad, and after clearing local costs, I.G.A. Athens registered profits from the Conference in the sum of 239,000 Greek Drachmas – about £1,000. This sum was donated in its entirety to EGATIN and constituted its first financial basis. It signified the beginning of independent development which I could say was not effected so easily! I remember this quite well, as at the time I was Treasurer on the Council of I.G.A. (Athens). When Yannis Tsegos and I proposed that the earnings from the first European Meeting should go to the EGATIN instead of I.G.A. (Athens) there were some reactions from the rest of the colleagues on the Council. Some wondered why this new Federation to be was so important, as to merit the earnings of our first large scale event and the others insisted (not unjustifiably) that our Institute being in its first stages of development, also needed the money. A detailed discussion followed, and fortunately the reactions were overcome. Thus, the I.W.G. acquired its own first treasurer, Rudi Olivieri-Larson and its own bank account in Switzerland.

Our fourth I.W.G. meeting took place in London in May 1987, preceded, as established in Heidelberg, by a leaderless meeting of sensitivity.

New important decisions were taken: the three categories of membership were to be named a) Qualifying, b) Intermediate, and c) Introductory according to the level of training each Institute offered.

It was also decided that 12 institutions would be accepted as qualifying members, provided they would have already qualified five persons. Seven Institutions would be accepted as intermediate members and seven more Institutions would be accepted as introductory members.

It was also finalized that during the Oxford Group-Analytic Symposium of the Group-Analytic Society in September 1987, apart from the I.W.G. meetings and the open, large plenary of all interested colleagues, the first formal meeting of all the delegates of all three categories of prospective membership would take place, and that the I.W.G. would send an informative letter to all the Institutions concerned.

During the 4th open, plenary which took place in London that May (1987), a very fruitful exchange of opinions took place, very far away from the climate of tension and suspicion that had partly characterized the first and the second such meetings (Zagreb 1984 and 1986).

Our fifth meeting took place in 1987 during the Oxford European Symposium. The question of suspicion and mistrust, however, was not entirely finished. Simply it was easier to accept and discuss it as time went on.

It is interesting to mention a paper presented in the same place, Oxford, three years later, at the 8th European Symposium. The theme of that particular Symposium was 'Mistrust in the Matrix' and EGATIN had by then a session of its own. In that session Bryan Boswood presented what I would call a very courageous paper, in which he examined and commented on the climate surrounding the first years of EGATIN. He described how 'when the idea of EGATIN was conceived, the interest and excitement it

aroused within the Society . . . was matched by angry consternation: interest and excitement that a truly European Federation of training Institutes might escape the British Empire model which had so bedevilled the Society's international work; consternation that the move was a splitting manoeuvre ‘ or that it represented a power ploy designed to move the focus of Group Analysis from London to Athens.’ (Boswood, 1991, p. 3).

He added that what one heard in those days was ‘What is this EGATIN?’ ‘ EGATIN will be a flash in the pan, a meteorite, here today, gone tomorrow’ or ‘What is Tsegos up to now?’ and ‘Who do they think will *pay* for it?’ (ibid, p. 4).

Bryan Boswood went on to disclose how EGATIN was very much supported in the Overseas Training Committee and in the I.G.A. London Council by the non-British born members, such as the late Heinz Wolf. Heinz Wolf had embraced the concept of a European Federation with great enthusiasm and was the one who insisted that the Chairman of Council himself (i.e. Bryan Boswood) should be appointed delegate to signal the importance attached to the new network.

Perhaps it was such people who also realized what Yannis Tsegos insisted on since then – that the main significance of the move of focus from London to all of Europe (and not just Athens, was that it made the group-analytic movement truly group-centered while the London-periphery model was essentially therapist-centered.

Another instance of this mistrust, which I recall, was in a letter in ‘The Dialogue’ by the editor, saying that its a good thing we have our man in (this) EGATIN to keep an eye on them –meaning Bryan Boswood and forgetting that Yannis Tsegos was also a member of I.G.A. London.

There were more examples and stories, but I think all these can give us a feeling of the climate in those difficult times of ‘The Enthusiasm v.s. Mistrust’ phase!

Returning to the more concrete historical details our fifth meeting was an important one. As planned, besides three committee meetings of the I.W.G. and a large open plenary discussion on training issues attended by some 80 people, the first meeting of delegates took place.

The meeting started with 16 European institutions being represented. In the beginning I remember an interesting boundary incident. Though it was clear that this meeting was our first official one and that only authorized representatives would attend, some members from the Norwegian Institute insisted they participate without (bringing) an authorization. We suggested that they at least call home or that one of them could sign a piece of paper as a temporary delegate but they refused. A brief but heated discussion followed. It was a question of either strengthening the boundaries of the new group and affirming its identity or of losing a group member. We chose the first, as I think a good group analyst would, and the meeting started.

We proceeded and after a considerable amount of discussion, the participants voted unanimously in support of a vote of confidence proposed by David Clark from the Cambridge Group Work in the continued existence of our work towards the foundation of EGATIN. Subsequently the delegates authorized the I.W.G. to prepare a draft for the Constitution of EGATIN.

Constitution of EGATIN

The Constitution was mainly devised at the sixth meeting of the I.W.G. in Zürich in January 1988, based on proposals submitted from three Institutes (Athens, Copenhagen and London). Bryan Boswood and John Schlapobersky worked diligently and prepared the first draft for submission to the second Meeting of Delegates which was held in Zagreb in 1988. There it was revised and then drafted again by John Schlapobersky for

submission to the third meeting of delegates which took place in London during the May weekend of 1988. This meeting, after some further revisions, adopted it (in draft form) and authorized its distribution to all the European training institutes which were invited to seek membership for the Federation.

During this period and in parallel to the work on our constitution, a large flow of correspondence continued, whereby several group-analytic institutes and persons¹ showed interest in learning about and / or joining the network. In addition ~~to that~~, contacts were initiated by several other Federations or Organizations (such as the International Association of Group Psychotherapy (I.A.G.P., the Canadian Association of Group Psychotherapy and the E.F.P.P. (European Federation of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy) wishing to form institutional links with us.

The Consolidation (or Acceptance and Expansion) Phase

The culmination of all these activities and events led to the Inaugural Meeting of EGATIN which took place on 16 October, 1988 in Heidelberg. It was the end result of some two years of planning and activity by the Interim Working Group and this was in turn the result of several years of hard work in several centres, Athens and Heidelberg in particular.

The Inaugural Ceremony, which was preceded by the 6th Heidelberg Group-Analytic Symposium, was attended by delegates from fourteen of Europe's Group-Analytic Training Institutions.

It included a scientific meeting (on the topic of supervision), the delegates' meeting, two committee meetings and – last but not least – a banquet beautifully organized by I.G.A. (Heidelberg) at a restaurant by the famous Heidelberg Castle!

I would like to mention here an interesting detail regarding how the name 'EGATIN' came about. When Yannis was searching for a good combination of the initials of words to do with training, group analysis, networks etc. he thought of Engadin, the European city closely tied with Nietzsche and European philosophy and that was what helped him decide on the particular acronym.

Thus EGATIN 'a Federation of organizations which offer training programmes in group analysis which in general consist of personal therapy in a group, theory and supervision', to quote its Constitution, became a reality.

Its aims, as set in the Constitution, were and are 'to promote, on a non-profit making basis, scientific, educational, clinical and cultural activities' and 'to provide opportunities for dialogue and exchange in a European and International context' by means of which 'EGATIN will encourage high standards in group-analytic training programmes (through the sharing of expertise and experience between member organizations) and 'thus contribute towards the development and extension of training in group analysis', while 'protecting and respecting the character, integrity and internal affairs of each member organization'.

The task of the I.W.G. was then finished and the first Committee of EGATIN was elected. It was comprised of: Yannis K. Tsegos, who accepted the unanimous decision to be EGATIN's first chairman, Werner Knauss, last I.W.G. Chairman, who accepted to be the Secretary, Vibeke Nathan who was treasurer and Bryan Boswood and José Guimon, members.

During the inaugural weekend I remember feeling not only a sense of joy, completion and unity, but that it had taken a very long time to achieve our goals and come to that point. Now I realize that it was only two years, but filled with activity. Two years is indeed a very short time for the creation of a multi-national Federation.

The I.W.G. managed to have 3 – 4 international meetings per year, sometimes spaced as close as one month apart. I can think of committees whose members live in the same country – not to mention city – and do not manage to meet that often!

Perhaps more important than the founding itself, I think, is the tremendous amount of information which was compiled, tabulated and circulated about group-analytic training. The detailed profile table of all European group-analytic training institutions, the specific outline of selection criteria for group-analytic training candidates, and the collection of each institute's ethical code, to name just a few items of information, were not only done in record time but also according to a 1993 study (Moschonas, 1993) had not been matched by analogous American organizations of very long standing. I think this is at least one of the reasons why we felt that this account was worth writing.

The years which followed, witnessed the consolidation and expansion of EGATIN. Many meetings took place in cities which were well-known to us by then, such as Zagreb, Oxford and Heidelberg but most importantly in new ones, such as Bilbao, Copenhagen, Budapest and Moscow. The continually changing venues of our meetings started to show their intended results. The members of the committee and the EGATIN delegates were able to visit many institutes, meet their students and staff and exchange information and ideas with them in person. All the institutes we visited extended wonderful hospitality to us and not only did we acquire a clearer view about their training programmes and practices, they also felt much closer to the group-analytic European community. This contact was particularly important for 'young', so to say, Institutes which felt very encouraged and indeed supported towards moving forward.

To recount one final story, one of the meetings I remember very vividly was in Bilbao. It was my first visit to the north of Spain and we were going during an important occasion for the local institutes – a congress to celebrate the collaboration between two

group psychotherapy organizations. Our first committee meeting was combined with a visit to an archeological site. It was a beautiful hill with an old tree and a circle of short columns. Upon going near we saw a piece of paper on the stones saying ‘The Committee!!’. We all laughed with José Guimon’s idea and sat around the ancient stone circle! The next day, after the morning presentations, we discussed group-analytic issues in a seaside restaurant, eating the tastiest and strangest seafood I have ever had! Finally at the end of the event, we had our usual large open plenary with the students and staff of the local institute. But in this particular meeting we tried something new: as there was a lot of translating from English into Spanish and vice-versa, someone proposed that we each speak in our own language! We tried it and there was Spanish and French and Greek and English and Basque spoken and we communicated and functioned very much as a group. In the end someone said ‘it’s the first time we had such a vivid experience!’

In the years which followed Study Days were organized, new members took office and responsibility in the committee. Our constitution was revised and adopted in its final form in September of 1993. EGATIN’s membership grew, and is still growing.

Vibeke Nathan became the next chairperson, Rudi Olivieri-Larsson after that and so on. As for EGATIN’s most recent activities they are probably already familiar to many readers and subscribers to *Group Analysis*.

I believe that what is important – and satisfying to those of us who worked for it in its beginnings – is that EGATIN has passed the test of time and continues to function according to its initial aims independently and effectively.

EGATIN’s Founding Members were the following Institutes:

Institute of Group Analysis	Athens
Institute de Analysis Grupa	Bilbao
Cambridge Group Work	Cambridge

Institute for Analytisk Gruppe -og Familieterapy	Copenhagen
Gruppenanalyseseminare	Giessen (GRAS)
Institute fur Gruppenanalyse	Heidelberg
Institute of Group Analysis	London
Westminster Pastoral Foundation	London
Forderverein Gruppentherapie	Munster
Mindland Group Work and Family Therapy Course	Northampton
Centro di Analisi Terapeutica di Gruppo	Roma (CATG)
Training Committee of Centre for Mental Health	Zagreb
Institute fur Gruppenanalyse	Zurich

Acknowledgement

This paper was written with the collaboration of Bryan Boswood, Jose Guimon, Werner Knauss, Rudi Olivieri-Larsson and John Schlapobersky, all of whom I thank for their helpful comments and corrections.

End note:

¹ Due to the interest of several individuals (not delegates of a particular institute) to be in contact with EGATIN, the membership category of ‘interested persons’ was established.

References

- Boswood, B. (1990) ‘Mistrust and History’. 8th European Symposium on Group Analysis, Oxford, 2-9 September 1990. Unpublished.
- Foulkes, S.H. (1975) ‘Last Editorial’. *Group-analytic Contexts*, Vol. 22, February, 2003.
- Moshonas, D. (1993). Unpublished Dissertation. Institute of Group Analysis Athens.

Zoe Voyatzaki is a clinical psychologist, training group analyst and family therapist. She works at the Open Psychotherapy Centre, Athens, of which she is a founding member and in private practice.

Address for correspondence: Open Psychotherapy Centre, Haralambi 1 & Mavromihali, 114 72 Athens, Greece.
