



Intercountry Committees

Stemming from Rotary's Object and the Fourth Avenue of Service, Intercountry Committees (ICCs) aim to foster the advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace through the fellowship of Rotarians in two different countries united in the idea of service.

Intercountry Committees have a long tradition in Europe. In 1931 Rotary clubs in France and Germany established the first "Petit Comité Franco-Allemand," setting the precedent for Rotary's current ICCs. Today, ICCs in Europe continue to be a popular program for Rotary clubs and districts. In other regions, ICCs exist through the activities of various aid and friendship exchange programs.

The purpose of the first intercountry committee was to improve relations between France and Germany. Today the purpose of these committees is two-fold:

- 1) to increase international understanding and goodwill by encouraging Rotarians to visit each other's countries and homes;
- 2) to strengthen friendships by encouraging clubs or districts to link with clubs or districts in other countries in carrying out international projects.

Presently, Germany and France boast the most ICCs, with each country sponsoring 25. Italy sponsors 11 ICCs, Israel 10, and most other European countries sponsor at least one. ICCs are commonly formed to strengthen historic or cultural ties between two countries. For instance, ICCs exist between Portugal and Brazil, Belgium and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and France and Lebanon.

It goes without saying that the importance of ICCs is ever increasing. As the world continues to change and become smaller, new needs and opportunities arise to increase our understanding and appreciation of other cultures. Intercountry committees help facilitate the strengthening of social, economic, political, and cultural relations. During times of dynamic change and sweeping reform the strengthening of these relations is greatly needed. Intercountry committees also present a mechanism for the efficient promotion of peace between countries.

Typically, ICC activities include youth exchanges coupled with Rotary home hospitality. Professional training courses offering students and other qualified people the opportunity to broaden their knowledge in the contact country are also popular and particularly helpful in fostering improved socio-economic relations between countries. Another common activity is family exchanges, which often take place during the holidays. In addition, ICCs are frequently the framework through which World Community Service projects are carried out. Language skills are often improved through various exchanges between countries such as conferences and cultural events.

Today, ICCs continue to improve international relations. A recent example is the ICC that was formed in 1993 between Greece and Turkey, two countries with a history of enmity. Greek and Turkish Rotarians meet annually, alternating countries, to promote World Community Service projects and Youth Exchanges. Greek Rotarians also pay visits to Greek seniors living in Turkish homes for the elderly.

One of the ICC program's greatest successes has come in the form of a World Community Service project carried out by the France-Senegal ICC. Founded in 1984, this ICC has proven successful in developing the M'Bayene area located in the middle of the Sahelian region. The village, deprived of water in 1984, now has several wells with handpumps and overflowing reservoirs, thanks to the ICC. In addition to wells, a maternity clinic was established. Rotary districts in France, and a Rotary Foundation grant provided financing of the initial phase of activity. The Senegalese members of the ICC have played an important role in continuous follow-up, as has the government of Senegal. The villagers of M'Bayene were so delighted with the work of this committee that they decided to rename the village "M'Bayene Rotary." This ICC continues to be active through youth exchanges and equipping primary schools and health clinics in M'Bayene Rotary.

Intercountry Committees have also played a role in significant historic events. French Rotarians formed ICCs with Poland and Russia in the early 1990s, which helped reintroduce Rotary clubs to Poland and encouraged the establishment of Russia's first Rotary clubs after the fall of communism. Although the ICCs between France and Eastern Europe had a mentor-advisee relationship during the first few years, that relationship has evolved to be one of equal

standing. In one year alone, 40 French Rotary clubs provided more than US\$1 million assistance to Poland through the “Frapol” ICC.

Throughout the Rotary world, ICCs have traditionally served as a catalyst for international service through a variety of activities. The Chile-Argentina committee, formed in 1985, annually awards the Condor of the Andes Award to a Rotarian or non-Rotarian who has actively promoted peaceful and improved relations between both countries.

In recent years, the same French-German ICC that started the movement more than 70 years ago founded the first international Rotary club. The Rotary Club of Bouzonville-Wallerfangen alternates its meetings between France and Germany every other week, and its membership consists of Rotarians that often live and work on different sides of the border. The club’s goal of improving international understanding is aided by the fact that all of its members are bilingual.

As a result of all these activities, many lasting friendships and significant contributions to international service and understanding have been made.

If your club is not already involved with an ICC, you may be wondering how to establish one. First, it is only possible to form an ICC where there are two Rotary countries determined to work to improve international relations, increase understanding and international Rotary solidarity. If this exists, a club or clubs in country A seek out, by personal contact or through club to club interaction, in country B, suitable partners with whom to share this fellowship.

Direct contacts are made through visits of small representative groups, generally the president, president-elect, international service coordinator and their spouses, between clubs. Visits are reviewed by club members and approved before official club pairing takes place. When there is a significant number of contact clubs between country A and country B, then the formation of an ICC should be considered. These contacts and consideration of an ICC should be presented to the district governors of the respective districts for their information.

Each country forms a national section for the coordination of activities. A board elected for three years and which consists of a president, a secretary, and a treasurer operates each section. The delegates of all clubs within a district, together with the board of the section, constitute the management board. Current governors of the districts involved are by right members of the management board.

All intercountry committee activities must follow the objectives of Rotary International. Both countries are encouraged to maintain close relations, exchange directories and regional publications, keep each other informed of relevant events of Rotary life in the other country and inform their regional magazines. Country representatives must meet at least once a year, alternating from one country to the other.



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