

REPORT OF RESULTS

CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPEAN STATUS AND POTENTIAL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Membership Development conducted a survey of Rotary clubs in Central and Eastern Europe to explore these clubs' strategies for recruitment, new member orientation, retention, and future growth potential. The goal of the project was to uncover the current status of these clubs and ideas that would prove useful to other clubs in this region. The survey was distributed to 435 clubs in 12 Rotary districts, comprising Rotarians in 18 countries. To allow for the highest response rate possible the survey was translated into languages local to this region: Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, and Latvian. 141 responses were received, resulting in a 32.4% response rate.

Recruiting new members to Rotary in this region seems to come primarily from Rotarians introducing their friends to Rotary. While a few respondents indicated that they first heard of Rotary through a business associate, by a margin of nearly 6:1 more respondents indicated they first heard of Rotary from a Rotarian friend. And they are joining Rotary clubs for 3 primary reasons (in order):

- 1) Fellowship
- 2) Service opportunities
- 3) Networking

The recruitment of new members into clubs in this region is a strong catalyst in the growth of these clubs. 130 of the responding clubs inducted 524 new members in 2003 – 04, an average of 15% growth per club. This finding supports the assertion by respondents that growth over the next 1, 5, and 10 years could be as much as 30%. Respondents identified 3 main factors that have contributed to membership GROWTH among clubs in their country (in order):

- 1) Improved community awareness of Rotary
- 2) Club actively identifies new members
- 3) Strong club leadership

The biggest OBSTACLE to membership development in these countries according to the survey respondents is the current economic situation, followed by a loss of industry or commerce in the area.

Another catalyst to regional growth is the establishment of new clubs. Based on statements made regarding how various meeting times, length, and content affect recruitment and retention, districts would be wise to focus the creation of new clubs during dinner hours, including a meal, and restricting the meeting length to 1 – 1.5 hours. It is also clear from this survey that the amount and quality of Rotary content in meetings has a strong impact on members' positive perception of the club meetings.

Rotary clubs in this region are using a few of the publications produced by Rotary International to educate their potential members. The respondents who indicated their club uses the publication, *This is Rotary*, gave it a rating of 2.16 – Effective for Recruitment. The respondents who indicated their club uses the publication, *What's Rotary*, gave it a rating of 2.21 – Effective for Recruitment.

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When developing recruitment strategies, 69% of clubs in this region establish goals for recruitment, but clubs in this region in general are reluctant to formalize these goals into any form of membership campaign. 75% of respondents reported their club does not sponsor membership campaigns. This finding supports the assertion by nearly 60% of respondents that RI sponsored / administrated membership campaigns are not appropriate for this region.

As regards the orientation of new members into Rotary, nearly 60% of respondents have an orientation program in place for new members and 55% also assign new members to a committee position right away. However, only 43% of clubs responding have a mentor program in place for new members. Evidence gathered by RI from other regions on this subject suggests that clubs with all three of these strategies in place have a higher rate of retention for members in the 1 – 5 year tenure range.

One of the strongest statements to come out of similar surveys conducted in other regions of the Rotary-world has been the request of RI to produce support materials such as *Rotary Basics*, *Getting Started in Rotary*, the *ABCs of Rotary*, and to increase the quality of the Information for New Members section of the RI web site. Although Rotary International has responded to the demand for new member support and orientation materials, the findings from this survey indicate that very few clubs in the Central and Eastern European region are using them. The surveyors suspect this may be due to a lack of publicity to the region by RI regarding the availability of these materials, or the many languages read and spoken in this region into which Rotary International does not translate. When RI published materials are used, the respondents find them to be informative, 35% of those using ABC's of Rotary, and 86% of those using Materials for Download from the RI web site.

On the issue of membership retention, overall 49% of respondents indicate retention is NOT an issue in their country. Of those that indicate retention IS an issue in their country:

- 100% of respondents in Russia, east of the Ural Mountains
- 100% of respondents in Macedonia
- 100% of respondents in Bosnia-Herzegovina
- 2/3 or fewer of respondents in all other countries feel it is an issue

This lack of concern about retention may be supported by the finding that only 45% of responding clubs set annual goals for retention.

Evidence from surveys conducted in other regions of Rotary show that clubs active in community service are more likely to retain their members. In this region clubs are actively working on

- 1 – 2 major service projects each year
- 3 – 4 minor service projects each year

Most respondents (2/3) maintain that these are reasonable commitments for the needs their club perceives in its community. However, 1/3 report this current activity level is inadequate and there is more work to be done.