

## Notes of AFINet Annual General Meeting: 13 September 2024

**Present:** Gallus Bischof (chair), Emmi Kauppila (notes), Bernie Avdic, Anja Bischof, Gallus Bischof, Cassandra Borges Bortolon, Ursula Buchner, Jacqueline Carhoun, Gyang Dung, Eileen Farrah, Meike Haefker, Ashley George, Marileine Kemme, Ruth McGovern, Tuuli Pitkänen, Angie Scott, Ed Sipler, Oona St-Amant, Alicia Ventura, Anne Whittaker, Steve Staunton

No	Item
1	<b>Minutes of the last AGM – agreed</b>
2	<p><b>Chair of Trustee’s report:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Trustees have held four virtual meetings since last AGM in September 2023.</li> <li>b) Trustee updates: Candice Groenewald is on maternity leave, but will continue serving as a Trustee; Anne Whittaker will retire by the end of the year, but will also continue serving as a Trustee. It was emphasized that we encourage members to volunteer as new Trustees. There will be no Trustee election this year, but one is planned for next year.</li> <li>c) International Handbook of Addiction and the Family book will be published soon, hopefully by the end of the year. Richard Velleman and Gallus Bischof have secured an Open Access publishing contract and funding through University of Bath and UK Research Initiative – a major step in maximizing the book’s reach  <p>Additionally, there are two new book projects since last AGM. One is based on contributions from the Rotterdam conference and is being edited by Candice Groenewald, Emmi Kauppila, and Geoffrey Maina. The other one is based on this year’s conference presentations and will be edited by Emmi Kauppila, Cassandra Borges Bortolon, Kirsten Fredriksen, Marileine Kemme, Geoffrey Maina and Paige Webb.</p> </li> <li>d) Conferences: The initial dates for the Quebec 2025 conference have been changed: the pre-conference workshop will take place on May 21, and the conference will be held on May 22 and 23. The event will be hosted by Joël Tremblay, Mélissa Côté, and Audrey Bourassa. We expect the call for abstracts and "save the date" emails to go out in the next few weeks. Keynote Speakers include Sharon Dawne from Australia, who will present on the Parents Under Pressure program and will lead a half-day workshop on May 21; Myriam Laventure will present a program for families where parents are substance users; there will be a joint presentation from speakers from Quebec and Pauline Stewart from New Zealand, focusing on families of First Nation people struggling with drug problems; Jim Orford will be the opening speaker, providing an overview of research on addiction and family interventions – past, present, and future. There will be bursaries available for people without institutional backup to cover conference fees and travel. This year’s online conference had 95 participants, including 16 from the Global South. This was the fifth conference, and the plan is to continue organizing both face-to-face and virtual conferences. Special thanks to Eileen Farrah, Emmi Kauppila, Gill and Richard Velleman for their efforts in preparing the online conference.</li> <li>e) Membership update: We now have 849 members from 57 countries, an increase of 165 members since the last AGM.</li> <li>f) The website, conferences, and webinars are our main communication channels. All members are encouraged to share their research findings and</li> </ul>

	<p>materials on the AFINet website, as it also serves as a repository. The website is our main source of expenditure, and funds from the conference will be used to maintain it. Another key communication channel is the newsletter. Special recognition was given to Eileen Farrah for managing this. Members are encouraged to share their conference experiences, research updates, and practical project news in the newsletter.</p> <p>g) The 5-Step-Method remains a core element of AFINet and continues to generate income. While the Trustees agree to keep promoting the 5-Step-Method, we remain open to incorporating other approaches as well. Since the last AGM, 9 courses on the 5-Step-Method have been conducted.</p> <p>h) We recently held our 30th webinar, and last year it was decided to move to a bi-monthly schedule. In the past 12 months, six webinars have been organized. Special recognition was given to Richard Velleman and Eileen Farrah for organizing, as well as to the tech support team at the A-Clinic Foundation in Finland. Speakers for the next three webinars have already been confirmed, with the next one scheduled for November 27th, featuring Francine Ferland and colleagues from Canada, who will present their work on CSOs and problematic internet use. Information about both past and future webinars is available on the website, along with recordings of previous webinars. Interest in the webinars remains high.</p>
2	<p>Treasurer's report</p> <p>a) AFINet is registered as a small charity in the UK. Although we are an international organization, we needed to be registered somewhere, and the UK was chosen as AFINet was founded there. AFINet holds an account with the UK Cooperative Bank, specifically a Community Direct Plus account, which is designed for small charities. This is beneficial for us because a regular business account would incur large banking fees that would reduce our funds. Since we do not charge membership fees, our income and number of transactions remain small. Richard Velleman manages the account along with Gill Velleman, with Gallus Bischof periodically overseeing it.</p> <p>b) The balance carried forward from the previous year was £1,200, and we earned £15,500, bringing the total to £16,500. The largest amount, nearly £12,000, came from the Rotterdam conference, and this year's online conference generated around £1,000 (as of September 7). From 5-Step-Method-related work, we received £2,250. Webinars have also generated some income through donations.</p> <p>So far, our expenditure has totaled £14,000. This includes £3,500 for the domain and ongoing website costs, including the website administrator, who handles applications and generates logins for new members. We also passed £10,000 to the Quebec conference organizers as seed funding. A small amount has been spent on developing 5-Step-Method resources. Currently, our funds stand at just over £2,500.</p> <p>Looking ahead to next year, we estimate an additional £300 from the online conference and £5,000 from the Quebec conference. Expected expenditures include £3,500 for the website.</p> <p>c) Future plans. If we decide to expand, we may need to consider changing our charity status to become fully registered. Being a small, unregistered charity limits the amount of money we can handle and the number of transactions. Transitioning to a larger charity would require registration with the UK Charities' Commission, a complex and time-consuming process. So far, we've avoided this by managing our finances carefully, as no one has the capacity or desire to deal with the extensive paperwork.</p>

	<p>Currently, we remain an individual membership organization, meaning each member joins independently. We do not offer corporate memberships, where an organization's entire staff would become members automatically, though this could bring in more income. While we don't need to change this model now, it could be reconsidered if we want to increase our activities and require additional funding.</p> <p>We have also avoided charging membership fees to prevent barriers for researchers, policymakers, or practitioners who want to join and work with affected family members. While fees could generate income, they might deter some people from joining. For now, our priority is to keep membership open and accessible, with our focus on supporting underserved affected family members. At this time, we have no plans to apply for full charity status or introduce membership fees.</p> <p>d) Thanks to Gallus for providing financial oversight, and particularly to Gill, who's provided considerable assistance with the finances and online banking transitions transactions.</p>
3	<p>Any other business</p> <p>a) Attracting new Trustees. We've previously discussed how to attract more members, particularly from low- and middle-income countries, and we've made good progress with 57 countries represented, including 12 from Africa. However, we haven't done as well in attracting new Trustees, especially those who can dedicate some time to help move AFINet forward. Over the years, Trustees have brought up many great ideas—like translating website content into other languages or improving country reports—but we often lack the manpower to implement them. Most of the work falls a small group of people, which isn't sustainable. It was discussed that we want to encourage a new generation of younger researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to join as Trustees and take an active role in leading initiatives.</p> <p>b) Capacity building. When we gather, we generate a lot of great ideas - but the challenge is that people only have the time to pursue one or two of these ideas, and many fall by the wayside. We have 850 members from 57 countries, but we need to find ways to engage more of them to contribute even a small amount of their time to move these ideas forward. It was proposed that a meeting be organized to allow members to share ideas for AFINet's development. Although not all 800+ members are expected to attend, even a small group could generate meaningful discussion in one-and-a-half to two hours. The idea of preparing spotlight slides for discussion was suggested, allowing more time for brainstorming and actionable development. The suggestion of calling this AFINet Open Space was made, creating a platform where members could share ideas and explore how they might be supported or developed, particularly for those more involved in practice rather than research. It was also suggested that this be further discussed at the next Trustees' meeting to ensure a structured approach.</p> <p>c) New members inquired about the responsibilities of being a Trustee. It was explained that Trustees oversee the organization, similar to a board of directors in businesses, and hold financial and leadership responsibilities. The Board consists of 14-15 members from various countries. Official duties include attending four meetings a year, but Trustees are also expected to</p>

	<p>contribute actively to the organization's work, as there are no paid staff. Responsibilities may include launching initiatives, technical tasks, encouraging participation, and translating or providing materials for newsletter. There is a draft Job Description on the website and members are both welcome and encouraged to apply to join the Trustee group, if they have time to contribute to some of the necessary tasks. The Job Description can be accessed here: <a href="https://www.afinetwork.info/about-afinet/trustee-responsibilities">https://www.afinetwork.info/about-afinet/trustee-responsibilities</a></p>
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Emmi Kauppila  
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