

# INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES

A short message about future opportunities for international U3A exchanges and to keep you up to date with activities in the last year.

The Third Age Trust has been represented on the International Association of U3As (AIUTA) for more than 25 years and members have been able to attend international conferences in different countries around the world. The numbers who attended have been small, but other activities such as visits, exchanges and twinning have been developed by individuals or U3As. In 2015 the Trust set up its International Committee which intends to build on all these initiatives. U3As in Surrey have already been involved in exchanges with Japan, Poland, Sweden and Spain. The exchange with Poznan U3A in Poland started in 2013 and is an on-going relationship between Poznan U3A and Surrey Network. In 2016 a group will be travelling to Poznan for five or six days between mid-May and mid-June; the date to be decided once both sides have progressed their arrangements. In 2014 and 2015 the exchange group which had thirteen members from six U3As visited Poznan in the first year and hosted in the second year. I would be delighted to hear from anyone who would be interested in learning more and who might be interested in setting up similar exchanges.

Poznan U3A has about 1200 members and its English Language interest group has about 100 members. All our hosts had a working grasp of English and we were helped by having two members of the Surrey party who were native Polish speakers. Our first visit coincided with the start of the academic year in October when we took part in the impressive ceremonies in the main university hall; the U3A is completely independent of the university but they have an excellent relationship and the U3A can use university facilities for events and classes. In 2016 it seems a good idea to visit in the early summer when the countryside will be looking its best; in June the conditions will be similar to in England, while Poland has a continental climate so in mid-summer it is likely to be hotter than in the UK.

As well as this Polish link I am aware that the exchange with Spain is likely to continue. In addition, I have been approached by the President of Mauritius U3A, Armoogum Parsuramen, who would like to set up a twinning and exchange programme between Mauritius and the UK. I am looking for people who are interested in this exchange as well, although we are at a very early stage of planning and nothing may happen until 2017. You may be interested to look at the latest edition of U3A Signpost - <http://worldu3a.us6.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4591b7dedb80e8dc4ca93c1af&id=a7cf938f45&e=95282656ab> - which has a picture of the President of Mauritius, Bibi Ameenah Firdaus Gurib-Fakim, visiting Delhi U3A recently.

You may also see an article in a forthcoming issue of Third Age Matters about international matters as the Chairman of the International Committee, Ian McCannah, Trustee for London Region, looks to raise its profile.

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