

## **Prague 2004**

The Visegrad Countries, Poland, The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary began to cooperate on a number of health issues even before they became members of the European Union. The Czechs were given responsibility for “Autism” and invited the World Autism Organisation to collaborate in a conference in 2004. Held at Charles University speakers came from all over the world to attend this momentous event. Mirka Jelinkova put together a superb conference which offered up to 4 parallel sessions at a time. There were some memorable social events including music in the very rooms that some of Mozart’s music was first performed. Prague is, of course, a stunning and beautiful city in its own right.

Politicians and parents were able to discuss, with professionals from all over the world, possible solutions to the many problems in such difficult circumstances. It is pleasing to note that initiatives developed at that time are now operating well but, as always, there is an increasing demand and need for further provisions.

## **Hong Kong 2010**

The World Autism Organisation responded to requests for help and support from parents in Hong Kong. Hong Kong had, in the comparatively recent past, been incorporated into mainland China and there was still some political confusion and concern about the future. As is so often the case in the history of autism, parents were taking the initiative in initiating the spread of knowledge through conferences. On this occasion it was very pleasing to see prominent Chinese officials in attendance and talking with parents and professionals for the global region as well as from the USA and Europe.

Chinese social culture has a very entrepreneurial element and the seeds for a number of autism related initiatives were sown here. Speakers from Australia, USA and Europe supported existing developments and learned a lot from local initiatives. Hong Kong itself must be one of the most fascinating cities in the world.

## **Dublin 2013**

The Irish Autism Society (ISA) celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013 and the WAO partnered the ISA in terms of providing speakers from all over the globe and in publicising and promulgating information about the conference. As with all conferences involving the WAO there was a wide variety of presentations available but, in this case, a concentration on the provision of high quality services which recognise the dignity of the individual and their right to make choices. To celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European “Charter of Rights for Persons with Autism” a book describing progress in all areas, our successes and failures, was disseminated and widely discussed.

The legendary friendliness and hospitality of the Irish was very apparent in the social events and the easy access and debate with Irish professionals and politicians and, of course, parents and people with autism.