

## **AGM 2023**

### **President's report - notes February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Dear Members of SARA,  
Dear Friends and Colleagues,

First of all I'm very happy to welcome all of you to our very first face-to-face Annual General Meeting for a long time, 3 years to be exact. The last one was held in June 2019 in Fribourg, and since then 3 editions via Zoom. So let say that we are very happy to see you all in person.

I think we can look back at 2022 with mixed feelings.

First 2022 was a year where war was back in Europe, only few thousand kilometers away from Switzerland. The decision of one man has had an horrible impact on million lives across multiple countries. The consequences have been and continue to be horrendous. I believe we all know directly or indirectly entire families that have been dramatically impacted by this war. Switzerland has welcomed a massive number of refugees across the country and within almost all local communities. Companies have also taken strong decisions following the war in Ukraine such as shutting down entire operations in Russia and moving out and supporting their employees and their families with relocation packages. We have experienced some very difficult situation with families torn apart and challenges with administrative procedures such as immigration or bank account opening where Russian nationals are banned from all major banks.

2022 has also been the year where inflation started to rise across all countries, and this has been and will be a challenge. First of all, the national banks, starting with the Fed but then followed by many other national banks including the SNB have increased their interest rates. For SNB from an all-time low of -0.75% it has been increased 3x in 2022 to reach 1% (still much lower than the US at 4.5%) and is expected to be risen again this year. These could have a direct impact on landlords who will be allowed to increase rent.

We all acknowledge that the rental market has been and continues to be incredibly dry and challenging due to a massive number of newcomers and fewer offer on the market, especially in the larger cities such as Zurich, Geneva and Lausanne, therefore prices' increase will be another challenge on our list.

Our teams must spend much more time digging for properties and sometime queue for public viewings, even more than before.

Anyway, despite these challenges, I believe we can say that we are very fortunate to live and work in Switzerland where all these downturns have had a much lower impact than many other countries. We still remain in a very safe country and inflation remains low, especially if you compare it to the UK, Spain or Italy.

On a business level, I believe most of us can say that 2022 has been a year to remember due to the high level of work we have accomplished. The post-pandemic era, with the normalization of remote work, lack of talented local workforce and globalization, had a massive positive impact on our industry volume. I think that we can now all say that in this part of the world the Covid crisis is over and Switzerland beneficiaries from our stability and being a safe-haven country.

This brings me to SARA itself. We at the SARA board acknowledge that during the last years, we have been all devoted to ensuring our respective companies could go through COVID crisis with not too much harm and then had to cope with very high volume of work. It had an impact on SARA activities and we all acknowledge that.

I took Presidency in late August and 3 new board members have been elected. With such work force I would like to take few minutes to detail which decisions have been taken with the current board for 2023.

First, as you may have noticed, the General Assembly has been brought forward to February instead of a Summer date. This allows us to wrap up the previous year and look forward to the new year. Even though the last AGM was only a short 5 months ago, 3 board meetings have already been held and a new dynamic and repartition of roles has been put in motion.

We have divided the board into different groups responsible for specific topics : 1 group for Communication & Marketing, 1 for Events & Networking, 1 for Training & Webinars. Each group being in charge of putting into motion board decision and bringing back suggestion on possible improvements. .

Our first action has been put in place by the workgroup Events & Networking. We all acknowledge that one of the key element of an association as SARA is networking opportunities and exchanging amongst members. This was also the main point of interest shown in the survey we did a few years ago. That element of course suffered tremendously during the last 3 years as we had to cancel many events and had only online reunions. We decide to turn the page and establish many more opportunities for our members to meet in person on a more regular basis. You have therefore all already received the complete agenda of the events for 2023, and there will be at least 17 of them.

Hence, we decided to organize regular informal apéros in Geneva, Lausanne, and Zurich. These apéros are open to our members and all employees who wishes to join. First drinks are sponsored by SARA. The idea is just to get together and meet each other, nothing more complicated than that. The dates and locations are set so whoever wants to show up is more than welcomed. We had already our first one in Zurich three weeks ago where approx. 15 people attended, and our 2<sup>nd</sup> one in Geneva two weeks ago where 15 people attended. The next one is in Lausanne on Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> , please join and participate.

If you have missed the dates, please reach out to Sabine who will be happy to share them. Also you will all receive an Outlook invitation a few weeks in advance of each event to make sure no one forgets about them. We hope to see many of you and your team members including the management, the back-office & the consultants.

2023 is also an important year as we will celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the association. A big event will be organized on June 29<sup>th</sup> in Geneva. Make sure you already book the date in your agenda. More information will follow of course.

Regarding Communication & Marketing, the newsletter is still in place and we expect to send one every quarter. We have reviewed slightly the structure, as you may have seen in the one from October. Of course Sabine is always seeking for info, intel or any relevant information so please feel free to share it with her as we are happy to include it in the next release and on the website.

Among the larger events, we are looking forward to a great EuRA conference in Dublin late April where most of us will attend. We will of course also be holding our traditional SARA breakfast on Friday morning in Dublin.

Within the RMC world, the biggest announcement of 2022 was clearly the merger between SIRVA and BGRS. As we all know the RMC world remains under high pressure, which results in high pressure on us DSP both in terms of service delivery and pricing. Added to the volatility of currencies and some contracts negotiated in USD with RMCs, this is only increasing the pressure on our services delivery.

We as DSPs must remain flexible and adapt to volatile and complex needs both in terms of content of services as pertaining to volume. I believe most of us had struggled during Covid and then had to handle a very high volume of arrivals, especially in 2022 during which the level of transfer and international recruitment has reached brand new levels. If you feel you need any support from your peers, SARA is there for you. We are all experienced individuals that can benefit from each other and I truly believe that we are all genuinely good people that can help each other, despite being competitors.

I truly hope that 2023 will bring more joy to the world and will be positive for all of you. For now it looks bright and we hope it will be a great year for all of us and that new horizons are much clearer than the past.

As always, if you have any suggestions or ideas for SARA, please contact us any time – we are open for ideas and would love to hear from you.

At this stage I wish to thank our Executive Officer Sabine for all the work she has done.

I also thank all other board members for their contributions and look forward to working with all of them this year. I would also like to thank our past president, Sjoerd who guided us within SARA during these pandemic years. And wish you all a great evening.

Guillaume Bédât