



# FAWCO Clubs in Motion

*Annual Report 2020*

How strange it seems that a year ago I wrote that, for the moment, we couldn't get together to walk in groups. How dispiriting it is that we still can't get together, but it is also encouraging to see that some clubs are trying to overcome the difficulties and are coming up with new ideas and activities to keep their members in motion. FAUSA suggested a Virtual Motion Day once a month, and that has been very successful. It was also suggested that clubs could do the same, but so far the idea has not taken off. Some clubs have reported individual walking, but not necessarily on the same day as other members of the club. "Virtual" physical exercise events that have been added to clubs' calendars have included yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates, Zumba and dance sessions.

Tabulating stats following the previous format was not possible this past year. We can't measure dancing, nor distances for skiing and kayaking. Golfers count their strokes, but not necessarily their distances, although a map of the course would show how far from tee to hole, but not from hole to the next tee, nor the extra distance for trips to the rough to search for lost balls, although all of this is indeed exercise. The important thing, though, is to show that there is motion of some sort in as many clubs as possible, since it's good for our health, both physical and mental.

**Munich IWC** gets kudos as the only club that has reported on a regular basis, sending their monthly stats for short and long walks before the pandemic, and then short but distanced walks as well as a lot of individual activity. The members agree that it is important to get out for fresh air, exercise, and socializing, so they walk, then buy coffee to go and chat a bit. In November, in addition to their short walks in twos, distanced and masked, and their individual walks, they reported Tai Chi, cycling and kick-boxing. Total km for 2020 were 16,812.

**AIWC Casablanca** has a running/walking group that met twice weekly for nine months of the year and covered approximately 5 km each time, but the pandemic shut things down until mid-June. When people were once again allowed to exercise outdoors and along the coast roads, members resumed their group walks even more often, three times a week. By October they had increased activities to six times a week, and renamed the group "Hot to Trot." Numbers were up as well, with sometimes as many as ten participants.

## **AWC Amsterdam and Haarlem**

AWC Amsterdam's walking group started back up last February, walking one or two days a week, about 5 km around a loop. They are generally enjoying themselves too much to take photos or send stats. The AWCA Haarlem walking group is also very active, and with

sports centers closed because of the pandemic, there was even more need to get exercise elsewhere. Also, outdoors felt a lot safer than indoors, but numbers are limited and 1.5-meter distancing is compulsory. Although there are 6 to 8 walkers at a time, they respect the social distancing rules. They meet weekly and walk between 5 and 10 km each time, over beaches, dunes, waterworks and nature parks, where they encounter deer, sheep, foxes, wolves, and even Highland cows. They say they love it, even on rainy days or despite freezing temperatures. They have enough photos to create their own album, and sometimes they send photos of the sunrise to CiM.

**AWC Zürich** walks weekly and takes lots of selfies.

**AWG Languedoc-Roussillon** continues to organize walks almost every month to explore the countryside around Montpellier. The walks are usually a few kilometers and take about two hours. From July to mid-October, members took advantage of their proximity to the Mediterranean, and a group met at the beach each week, weather permitting. Their activities included walking, exercising, swimming, paddling, sitting and chatting, depending on the temperature of the water and their energy levels. For part of the year another group used strolls within the city limits for an English-French language exchange. The two-hour walk for small bilingual groups was divided into 30-minute segments. The groups started speaking in either English or French, and there was a language change after each break. (Sometimes they needed timekeepers.) All topics were permitted, as long as the walkers remain focused on language development and on having fun. About 25 members of AWG-LR and their friends also participated in the annual fundraising Cancer Support France Languedoc Walk for Life in September.

**AWC The Hague** had to cancel group walks during the spring and part of the summer, but they are back in Motion.

**AWC Bern** reports that they had a great season. Last summer things were not as “buttoned up” as they later became, and most of the time they did keep a social distance, just because of the way they hike. But that doesn’t make for great group photos. And because many members were not excited by the idea of train travel during the pandemic, the group was usually smaller than under “normal” conditions. In June at the Simplon Pass they started in a snowstorm and ended with the sun in a beautiful field of wildflowers. In September they hiked past the highest hotel in Europe at the Faulhorn, near Grindelwald. One member said the memories of the past summer’s hikes kept her going during the winter.

**AWC London** participated in One Million Steps as a club, with 12 members tracking and logging their steps in a challenge to support people affected by diabetes, while at the same time keeping themselves active and healthy. They tallied 5,251,586 steps and raised £447 for the charity. They are keeping their fingers crossed that they will soon be able to restart their London Walks group for themed tours with Blue Badge guides, similar to the pub crawl at the Region 1 meeting in September 2019.

**AWA Vienna** did weekly “casual walks” around the ring, usually about 5 km, but that was

before restrictions prevented them from walking as a group. They were at least allowed to exercise outside, and started tallying the miles/km that they walked or ran, virtually and individually. For April, May and June they reported just over 426 km for seven walkers and 175 km for runners, plus 1186 virtual km and 206 km “in person.”

**AWC Hamburg** has been busy getting up and moving together when they could, and when they were not allowed to share the motion “live,” they did on-line Zumba. When they walked together, they were socially distanced, and when masks arrived, they wore them. They also cycled, and did a Run Against Violence in aid of their local charity Frauenhaus women’s shelters in Hamburg, and showed their interest in the environment by picking up trash on their walks.

**AWC Central Scotland** reported that their “Daunder ‘n’ Blether” group had their last in-person group walk in early March, but they moved the activity online with individual challenges and group missions. They completed two virtual challenges, “together but apart” walking events, as a group and with members in other countries, for a total of 1,580 miles. One was a personal marathon week, and the other was a virtual walk from Lands’ End to John O’Groats, from one end of Great Britain to the other, in ten days. Members said these events helped to keep them motivated to keep moving during lockdown. Their efforts in 2020, not including miles contributed to the FAWCO Virtual mission, totaled 2,231 miles (3,590 km), thus smashing their previous records. Their biggest “attended” event was the Lands’ End to John O’Groats virtual walk, a distance of about 600 miles, with 22 participants.

**AWC Denmark** has started a monthly walking group called “Our Secrets.” The leader of each month’s walk introduces the others to a part of Copenhagen that they may not know well. Their first walk was on Copenhagen’s “Green Path,” and since September they have covered a total of 71 km together.

**AWC Lebanon** reported that they were just about to revitalize their walking group when COVID-19 hit the world. Some communities there are very strict, and people were not allowed to walk outside, but other areas are a bit more lenient and allowed dog-walking. The club is currently trying to get a virtual group together to follow a walking/exercise class on YouTube. By doing it together, each in her own home, they hope to stay motivated and also encourage each other to keep moving.

**AC Lyon** is fortunate to have a member who was a professional ballerina and now teaches Pilates classes. Since the first lockdown in France, she organized individual and group classes on Zoom so members could stay in shape and keep in touch with the outside world from the safety of their homes. (You don’t even have to live in Lyon to join. Just contact the club.)

**AWC Berlin** recently added virtual dancing, Tai Chi, and Qi Gong to the club’s calendar. The Chinese martial arts have subtle yet powerful poses and moves, as well as a meditative layer. Members pop in a video and start moving, exercising and cultivating energy together for half an hour. The dancing is freestyle, any way they feel like moving. One member has also been doing “Boot Camp” six days a week all during the lockdown, a combination of

weights, cardio exercises such as jumping jacks, and toe reaches and crunches for abs. All you need is a set of weights, a mat and water (and you could probably skip the weights and just use your body weight).

**AWO Moscow**, like other clubs, has suffered from the restrictions caused by the pandemic, but they started “Moscow in Motion” during the summer of 2020. They were only able to do three group walks in September and October, but they hope to continue as soon as they are allowed to organize activities together in person.

**AWC Antwerp** reports that when allowed, they walked, and when they couldn’t walk together, they were very active via Zoom, particularly during the extreme lockdown. Two members gave yoga classes twice a week, and one member gave Zumba and aerobic classes. Gentle yoga for inner strength – breathe, stretch, and strengthen – as well as the eight limbs of Hatha yoga.

**AAWE Paris** members planned to participate in La Rochambelle in Normandy in mid-June for the third year in a row, but by April it became clear that this emblematic event, along with the other events that traditionally take place shortly after D-Day, would not take place because of COVID-19. Undaunted, a group of AAWE members got together in Normandy anyway and took part in a walk around the quaint hamlet of Colombiers-sur-Seulles, which is famous for its water mills. La Rochambelle was initially rescheduled for Sunday, October 25, but became a “designer event” in that each team was called upon to plot its own course, an “alternative” Rochambelle. The AAWE team decided to take a walk on Juno Beach at Courseulles sur Mer. The next day they gleaned potatoes in a nearby field and donated some to a local charity.

**AWEP** in Saudi Arabia couldn’t stay put and went to a different country, across the causeway to Bahrain, for their February walk. They walked as a group, sometimes robed, until they were confined to their compounds. Then they walked individually and more comfortably garbed. They formed a group of Sunday Strollers to walk together in some of their compounds, but one compound had stricter rules, and the ladies there could do no more than pace inside their homes. Several of the members sponsored themselves for the Sunday Strolls, with the funds raised going toward the Target Project, S.A.F.E. Sadly, the club has disbanded.

**AWC Luxembourg** had a hiatus because of a government-imposed quarantine which prevented group activities, even outside. When that was lifted, they resumed their walks, observing the social distancing rules. AWC Luxembourg has always had one of the most active walking groups, but the club is no longer a member of FAWCO.

Somewhere out there is a group called Exploring the Shire, but I’m waiting to hear more about it.

**Individual Renuka Matthews** completed the last of the Virtual Stair Climb Australia (SCA) Iso Challenge Series 2020, the Eureka Stair Climb, in November. She virtually

climbed 3630 stairs (165 floors). When she's not climbing, she also does yoga.

**Individual Margaret Hilditch** reported that she was stuck in New Zealand at the start of lockdown, but was able to walk every day and “keep her minimum goal of 12,000 daily steps running,” and it was a lot easier to do the social distancing in the open spaces of Kiwiland. On December 31 she had been counting her steps daily for 944 consecutive days, had tallied more than 6 million steps, and had increased her daily average to approximately 18,000.

**Individual Mary Stewart Burgher**, when she's not encouraging voter registration, finds time for at least 10,000 steps per day, and has been doing so since November 2015.

**FAUSA's** monthly Virtual Motion Day, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month, has been a great success, with all sorts of motion, including walking, hiking, jogging, running, cycling, kayaking, skiing, playing golf and tennis, yoga, fitness exercise at home, pickleball, and raking leaves. They've reported 459.5 miles.

We all hope that clubs will soon be able to resume their group activities, and I definitely hope that MOTION will be one of them. In the meantime, perhaps more clubs will try FAUSA's idea of at least one Virtual Motion day per month.

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