

International Sauna Association - ISA

The International Sauna Association ISA is an association of national and other sauna societies and related organizations as well as private people. It was founded in 1956 with the domicile in Germany. The first President was Mr. Hirvisalo and vice President Mr. W. Fritzsche, both well-known people in the sauna world. The first 20 years the organization was not working well and of re-founding was happening in 1977 with the strong support of the Finnish Sauna Society. The place of the office was moved to Helsinki into the premises of the Finnish Sauna Society in Vaskiniemi.

After the change of the office minister Harlad Teir was elected as the President of ISA for 1977 – 1984. From 2010 the President has been Risto Elomaa and his and the Board's term is continuing to the end of 2022.

The office as well as the archives of ISA have been all the time at Finnish Sauna Society's premises in Vaskiniemi where the saunas of the Finnish Sauna Society are also.

The President should be elected freely from the members. The founding members Finland, Japan, Germany and Austria have a mandate to have one member in the Board of Directors. The other members are elected in the General Meeting for four years term.

The cooperation between Finland and Germany inside ISA has been strong especially when thinking the sauna research. People like Prof. E. Conradi, Dr. Ilse and Werner Fritzsche as well as e.g. Dr. Brenke and CEO of Deutscher Sauna-Bund Mr. Rolf Pieper have been playing an important role.

From the members Austria, Germany, Japan and Finland have been continuously members from 1977 and are also called Founding Members. Besides those there are today around 20 national members and few supporting members. ISA has been also inviting three Honorary Members. Mr. Perfect Sweat, Mikkel Aaland is one of the honorary members.

ISA is a loose organization of people who have interest in SAUNA all over the world. It is a platform to work with other sauna people, to get to know other sauna/sweat bathing cultures in different parts of the world. This is done e.g. by arranging an option to visit saunas in other ISA member countries and other sauna cultures. Here especially Vaskiniemi with the research saunas and the Finnish Sauna Society with its own role in the sauna and sauna culture are playing an important role by arranging visits as well as special seminars and events also including two International Sauna congresses in Finland. The Helsinki Congress in 1974 with the publications is important basis for this.

The office, the members as well as especially the President is distributing information continuously to the global media, researcher and sauna enthusiasts.

ISA shall pursue the goal of publicizing the SAUNA and promoting its use on a GLOBAL scale by rallying supporters of SAUNA activities in different countries. This goal is served e.g. by acceptance of the Definition of Sauna recorded in Aachen 1999, promoting the scientific study of the sauna from e.g. such viewpoints as social history, folklore, medicine and technology.

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Important part of the documentation of different sauna literature is the SAUNA ARCHIVE and INTERNATIONAL SAUNA ARCHIVE published from 1952 until late 1988 in Germany by ISA and Deutscher Sauna-Bund. The key person here is Dr. Fritzsche who was responsible for editing the material. Unfortunately this material is not available in digital form but can be used e.g. in the office of German Sauna Bund or also in the library of the Finnish Sauna Society. ISA has naturally also an almost complete material in its archive.

Dr. Conradi was continuing the work with the support of Deutscher Sauna-Bund, and we have today available a web page www.saunaliteratur.de where it has been collected important sauna literature. The webpage is available free of charge.

ISA should be an open forum for discussions about different SAUNA – related matters in such a way that ISA is accepted widely as the source for information in the decision making e.g. in standardization, health related research, sauna construction and sauna technology, and finally in different sauna / sweat bathing culture matters.

The official language of ISA is English, but ISA is trying to make sure that material in other languages is translated into common languages whenever that is needed for making public the material available about the sauna. This is especially the case with languages like Russian, Japanese, Chinese and Baltic languages.

The goal is also served by organizing International Sauna Congress every fourth year. The XVIII Congress is happening in October 2022 in Stuttgart Germany as an official part of the INTERBAD exhibition and organized by Deutscher Sauna-Bund.

The Congresses are a place for the members as well as any people interested in sauna to listen presentations about sauna and present the latest material in the field of sauna. The discussions during the Congress are also an important part of the events.

The congresses also give an option to the other members to visit interesting saunas in the different sauna cultures so making sauna known to the other members. The contacts here open also options for sauna visits outside the Congresses to the other.

ISA has also an option to organize a special congress or seminar about some special matter if needed. This could happen e.g. if there are some new and important findings about the benefits of the sauna for human beings.

The compendiums collected after the Congress are an important part of sauna literature and is used by researchers and sauna enthusiasts. Some of these compendiums like Helsinki 1974 (published 1976) and Aachen 1999 have become as part of the base material for sauna.

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ISA is participating in several sauna events globally by sending material, arranging presentations and material as well as arranging training possibilities etc. One important area is to deliver suitable material to the members as well as to the media. This is partly covered by the website www.saunainternational.net.

ISA was also involved in the preparation of the RT- sauna cards and was able to get some Sauna card translated also into Swedish and English.

ISA is actively participating to the standardization at least on European Union level together with the manufacturers and users in the member countries. ISA is a member in TC 295 (wood fired stoves) as well as in USA in the UL 875 standardization.

SAUNA is important for those people who do know it, but we should deliver the message to new people so that as many as possible could enjoy. We are sure that SAUNA can solve problems and deliver health to people. As the Swedish people say, "IN SAUNA VERITAS!"

Written in Helsinki, 18th October 2022

Warmest regards,

Risto Elomaa, President - ISA

