

- ♦ Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Groningen and to the 6th International Conference of the ADBN.
- ♦ My name is Ges Roulstone, Chair of ADBN of Dbl.
- ♦ From its origins in 1994 the ADBN of Dbl has held regular international conferences for professionals working in the field of ADB in:

	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
1	1994	Hilversum, Netherlands
2	1996	Poitiers, France
3	1998	Osimo, Italy
4	2002	Zurich, Switzerland
5	2004	Harrogate, England

- ♦ Each successive conference has attracted a larger number of delegates than the one before. This year we are delighted to welcome X delegates.

- ♦ Greater numbers of delegates reflect representation from more and more countries. From our origins as a small group of professionals working in Northern Europe and Scandinavia, we have expanded to become ever more international in focus.
- ♦ This year at Groningen, we have delegates from X countries and every continent, a truly worldwide representation.
- ♦ The growth in the importance and popularity of this conference reflects an increasing understanding of the phenomenon of ADB and a corresponding growth in interest in work in this field from social workers, the medical profession and policy-makers.
- ♦ As people live longer we see a drift towards an ageing population, revealing rising numbers of people who develop impairments of sight and hearing as a consequence of ageing. In another context, we have a growing awareness of the needs of people with Usher Syndrome and other medical conditions that give rise to

dual sensory impairment. In both cases, there is an ever-greater need for professionals sharing experiences, best practice and research.

- ♦ There is also a need to link talk with action and to develop a sense of continuity and progress in our work. As a co-ordinating group we took a decision in Zurich in 2002 to link the outputs of future conferences with the agendas for subsequent events.
- ♦ The Harrogate 2004 conference identified 7 key areas for future international debate:-
 - ♦ Strategies for quality of life for deafblind people
 - ♦ The “Being Seen & Heard” work being undertaken by Dutch colleagues
 - ♦ Identifying dual sensory impairment among elderly people
 - ♦ Usher Syndrome
 - ♦ New technology

- ♦ New strategies and principles in working with elderly people with acquired deafblindness
- ♦ The growing political dimension of our work

- ♦ You will see all these themes reflected in the programme for Groningen 2006

- ♦ DB people themselves are represented this year more than ever before. We will all have greater opportunities to learn from their experiences, both as users of services and as professionals themselves.

- ♦ There will be 16 workshops for you to choose from covering topics such as:-
 - Communication by Art
 - Support groups for deafblind people
 - Developing psychotherapy practices for deafblind people
 - Usher syndrome
 - Communicating with medical practitioners

- ♦ The theme of this years conference is The Art of Communication – creating solutions on the individual, societal and organisational level in the world of acquired deafblindness.
- ♦ The title was carefully chosen to reflect our desire for a positive approach to our discussions – looking at solutions, not just problems. It also challenges us to be creative in our thinking; the “Art of communication” should encourage us to think laterally and in new ways to push forward the frontiers of our ideas and practice.
- ♦ ADBN is the largest, most established and most active of all the networks of DbI. This bi-annual international conference is offered by practitioners and deafblind people themselves for the dissemination of new ideas and practice in our field. We intend for this event to be the most important and influential in the calendar of every practitioner in the field. However we must also widen our target audience to include policy makers and administrators of social welfare. By perfecting the art of

communicating with them we really will be creating solutions for deafblind people.

- ♦ Thank you for listening. Enjoy the conference.