

# 2016-2017

## Secretary General report

As I am writing these words, I try to recall everything that happened in the past year. Hundreds of meetings, thousands of spreadsheets, millions of documents, invoices and bills and billions of e-mails that I've seen are passing through my mind now. These twelve months in the position of Secretary General have been immensely challenging for me. There were many late-night meetings and sleepless nights, several crises to solve and countless of difficult administrative tasks to face – these everyday challenges we struggle which are normally not visible to anyone outside the office. That is why I will pass the baton to the next SecGen with a feeling of relief that I can finally sleep calmly, without worrying about the organization, but also with pride of everything I managed to accomplish in this short time.

At the beginning of 2016 there was one full-time employee and one intern in the office. There was no proper bookkeeping or financial management system. There was little knowledge transfer in the organization. A year later we have three full-time employees, and a part-time office assistant, new office space, proper bookkeeping system and external accountant. We have much better organizational memory and proper procedures that are getting improved every month. We have secured strategic grants that will allow us to function for the next year and steady cash flow despite increased spending. I truly have the feeling that – despite some drawbacks – our organization is in much more stable situation now than it was a year before and that every year we are better prepared to take on a challenge of running campaigns, winning elections and reshaping Europe.

Below I'm summing up my main tasks, challenges and accomplishments in the last year. I grouped them into four areas that are crucial parts of the work of Secretary General: 1. Managing the office, 2. Managing financial documents, 3. Raising funds, 4. Statutory meetings and activities.

### I MANAGING THE OFFICE

#### **Recruitments and increase in office capacities**

The number of employees increased significantly throughout 2016 and 2017 and I was responsible for running several recruitment processes and then preparing inductions for new employees.

In August recruitment process for part-time **Office Financial Assistant** was launched. I disseminated the call among our partners and put it up on local job portals. 17 candidates

applied by the deadline. After initial review 7 were invited to interview. Interviews were recorded and EC had a possibility to listen to them. Then summary report was prepared after the process. Basing on the report EC selected one candidate.

In November EC made a decision to create a new position of **Communications Officer** and current Project Manager expressed the will to take up this position. Thus the EC decided to fill the position internally. In December new equipment was bought to allow Communications Officer work more professionally.

In December recruitment process for new **Project Manager** was launched. 40 candidates applied. After initial pre-selection 17 have been suggested for EC assessment. After first round of assessments 7 were invited for face-to-face or skype interviews. After the interview each candidate also received special task to complete within 1h. After the assessment and interviews EC evaluated each candidate and chose the most suitable person.

Two **intern** recruitment processes were conducted throughout my mandate – one in June and one in October. For October deadline 29 candidates applied. EC selected one after reviewing all the application documents.

### **Moving of the office**

Ever since the plans of hiring new personnel were established we knew it's necessary to enlarge the office – buy new desks, new computers and move to bigger room. In August 2016 I organized a big clean-up in the office. Every document was checked and properly archived. New furniture was bought and assembled by us and office was prepared to host more personnel. However, the office was still too small for the growing office. I contacted 5 different vendors and partners to find new office space for FYEG and after many discussions with our partners and deliberations on different options we managed to negotiate with the European Green Party that we'll stay at their offices but move to much bigger room. In February 2017 we moved our office to the room that is spacious enough to accommodate up to 6 employees. Also, thanks to cooperation with EGP, we have acquired new computers that Communications Officer set up in the office for our needs.

### **Personnel management**

Increase in office capacities also required increase in personnel management. Some management tools, like timesheet management, google office calendar, meeting room calendar, task sheets and office meetings, were introduced to facilitate it. I have also strived to meet with each employee individually on a monthly basis to discuss problems, conflicts, personal goals and needs.

In the office I've had a pleasure to work with very committed, hardworking, curious and value-driven people who would often go an extra mile to achieve the goals and who would not hesitate to challenge me to be better and better and for that I am very grateful. In times of great stress and hardship they were supportive, but they were also not afraid to be critical and challenge me, which allowed me to learn and grow. I really do think that I couldn't imagine a better working colleagues and I'm very grateful for the last months I spent with them.

## **Interns management**

Working with interns was especially challenging element of personnel management, because we had a strong commitment to provide educative, interesting and challenging internships. I met with each intern at the beginning and end of their work to discuss their plans, goals and learning objectives and then at the end to discuss the outcomes of their internships, challenges, views on the process and future plans. The reports were then presented to the EC.

In November a very unfortunate issue for one of our interns occurred – after leaving the country she was not let back in and had to wait for a new visa for almost two months, which significantly decreased the duration of her internship. I and the whole office immediately offered help by calling the immigration office, negotiating with the Greens/EFA group and providing the intern with support and consolation. Upon the EC's decision she was also offered compensation for the costs by FYEG.

## **II MANAGING THE FINANCES**

### **Bookkeeping**

Throughout most of 2015 and 2016, largely to insufficient office capacities, there was no proper bookkeeping. Notes and invoices were not catalogued or archived and costs – except for projects – were not properly evidenced. Thus, until the end of the year we were not really sure how much money FYEG exactly spend. This is not the case any more – in 2017 we know exactly how much we are spending on a weekly basis thanks to new bookkeeping system. We also know exactly how much money we have and should have on accounts or in cash.

In September 2016, after hiring of office assistant, a bookkeeping system was implemented. We developed an invoice numbering system and the Treasurer prepared system that would immediately connect spreadsheets to budget lines, so that we can track how much we're spending in each budget line on weekly basis. All the transactions and invoices are now documented in spreadsheets and integrated with budget which allows us to track the state of FYEG's expenditures monthly.

### **Consulting the FCC**

In December, February and April we consulted Financial Control Committee on all the changes and improvements in office financial management and took on board their very valuable advice. We have implemented some of them and currently – following their advice – we are implementing a new bookkeeping system that will integrate all transactions from different accounts, cards and cashbox into one spreadsheet.

This cooperation with Financial Control Committee has been very fruitful and I advise the next Secretary General to have regular meetings with its members to further improve financial administration of the organization.

### **Improving reimbursement procedures**

In September our Office Assistant prepared a new online reimbursement form and new procedure was introduced. Now all the reimbursements are submitted electronically before sending them by post. Our Office Assistant is also doing an amazing work of checking if all event participants have been reimbursed and contacting those who have not provided documents yet. That significantly improved the procedure and I hope it will be kept in the coming years.

### **Accounts and cash management**

In June a research of Belgian banks has been carried out by me and the Treasurer to identify best possible options. The EC, after examining our report, decided that FYEG should remain the client of our current bank.

We have also introduced two-step procedure in making all financial transactions. First invoice is put in the system by Office Assistant and then payment is approved by Secretary General. This ensures all transactions are handled by two people.

During office cleanup in August I discovered several envelopes and boxes with cash from various projects in different places around the office. All the money was counted and put in new cashbox. Then we bought a cashbook to trace exact amount of money we have in the office. In January, with the new year, we further improved the cashbook notation system. Now I have the only key to the cashbox that lies in a closed locker in the office.

In April, following FCC advice, we decided to put all the cash on the account and only use it for projects. Also, another bank subaccount for projects was created and bank card for Project Manager was ordered. This allows us to have more flexibility – finally we don't have to carry cash to projects.

## **III FUNDRAISING**

Securing stable funding for the organization has probably been my biggest priority, especially that with increased office capacities we have also increased our budget spendings. Throughout the year there has been a significant improvement in managing our fundraising activities – both in terms of structural funding as well as individual donations.

### **Structural funding**

We rely strongly on two structural grants – European Commission grant for youth organizations and European Youth Foundation structural grants. Both of these grants have been secured for the year of 2017. Also, previous structural grants have been closed and reported during my term, which secured stable funding for the organization. Structural grants that we have received in 2015 were closed and reported in June 2016 (EYF grant) and September 2016 (European Commission grant). Both structural grants received in 2016 have

been closed and reported by the deadline in February 2017, which is a significant progress from previous years and leaves surprises for the next EC and Secretary General.

### **Financial cooperation with EGP**

European Green Party is our major partner and donor. In 2016 all the donations from EGP were requested only at the end of the year, and joint project was only realized in November 2016. Since 2017 we had a significant improvement in our financial cooperation with EGP – joint activities are planned for the whole year in advance and the funds are now requested 4 times a year, every 3 months to improve FYEG's cashflow.

### **Financial cooperation with Greens/EFA group**

Throughout e-mail communication and meetings with group's Secretary General I established solid administrative relationship with Greens/EFA Group in European Parliament. A cooperation agreement signed in 2015 has been reviewed and the group was informed about all our projects at the beginning of the year. New cooperation agreement is being prepared right now and from this year we're agreeing on joint activities for the whole year in advance, not on ad-hoc basis as previously.

## **IV STATUTORY MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES**

During my mandate I was also directly responsible for organizing statutory meetings, and supervising other activities and projects organized by office and coordinated mainly autonomously by Project Manager. Out of these activities Strategic Planning Meeting and European Ideas Lab was coordinated by me, Working Groups Meeting, the GA and accompanying Spring Conference, Summer Camp and seminars (DoP, RiF) were coordinated by Project Manager and YO!Fest 2017 was coordinated by Office Assistant. We have been working in a model where every activity had a prep team consisting of volunteers, one or two supervising EC members and an office responsible person who would co-ordinate the work of the prep-team and ensure logistics and financing of the project. All the projects organized so far have been kept well within budget.

I was also responsible for organizing EC meetings and retreats, including: EC retreat in Serbia/July, EC meeting in Brussels/September, EC meeting in Madrid/October, EC retreat in Mainz/February, EC meeting in Brussels/May, as well as coordinating online EC meetings bi-weekly. The outcomes of the meetings and decisions were communicated – with various frequency, and sometimes with delays – to our MOs and partners to ensure transparency.

We would have weekly or bi-weekly office meetings during which we discussed progress in organizing projects and the challenges the prep-teams are facing and in case it was needed we'd help each other by taking up additional tasks. In total 11 various activities have been carried in 2016.

## **SUMMARY**

During the last year my work was very much focused on administrative and financial tasks, much more than I initially expected and much more than I would want to. But thanks to that we've made some concrete progress in many areas of office daily administration. FYEG office now has:

- Significantly increased staff capacities,
- New office space,
- Solid bookkeeping system in place,
- Several new administrative procedures,
- Stable structural financing ensured for the next year,
- Stable cashflow.

Many of these improvements would not be possible without advice, work and personal contributions from Gio as Project Manager, Laura as Office Assistant, Jean-Michel as Treasurer and Steva and Milena from Financial Control Committee and I would like to thank them personally for that.

I am well aware that not everything is perfect yet and that many things are still to be done by those who will come, but I am leaving my position with a strong conviction that I did as much as I could and as well as I could. And that FYEG is now in much better organized and prepared for the coming challenges than it was a year ago. I am confident that we are going in the right direction and I am glad that I could play my part in it.