

SECRETARY - GENERAL REPORT 2021 - 2022

GENERAL 26 - 29 MAY
KARLSRUHE **ASSEMBLY**

Introduction:

I am now concluding the first year of my second (and last) mandate. I am planning to finish my mandate in June 2023 and I will not run again. Knowing this, I am trying my best to leave FYEG Secretariat and the network in a better place than I received it and will focus my efforts in doing so for the upcoming year as well. As always, I am proud and thankful for all the members of the FYEG Office and FYEG EC for their hard work in these weird times.

Managing the Office:

Our office continues to grow which brings extra challenges. This is the largest FYEG Office in history. This is also the most "senior" FYEG Office - each staff member are the ones that stayed the longest in their positions.

Office Manager:

Caroline Mathieu was promoted to Office Manager in 2020 and she works part-time (71%). Caroline's expertise and seniority in FYEG work has been very helpful especially during the organisational change process. Her support has reduced the workload of the Secretary General but unfortunately, the Office Manager overtime has been at worrying levels (together with the Secretary General overtime). Unfortunately this shows the systemic problem of doing too much with little resources.

Project Manager:

Cristiana Cerri Gambarelli has been working as Project Manager since 2020 and she is responsible for FYEG's educational activities. She has also supported fundraising efforts of FYEG and she was instrumental in applying for two different grants: European Youth Together and Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values. Cristiana is also the line manager for the project intern.

Communications Officer:

Chris McFadyen has been working as Communications Officer since March 2021 and we have now extended his contract. Chris is responsible for FYEG's external communications and he has been also helping the office with the mailing lists, digital transition to various platforms, managing Slack and other tools that we use. In 2022, Chris became the line manager for the communications intern.

Administrative Assistant:

Julie Hombroeckx joined the FYEG office in August 2021 as a part-time administrative assistant. Julie supports the Office Manager in event logistics, finances and administration. In January 2022, Julie went on maternity leave. We hired Milan Zlatanovic to stay longer after his internship and replace the Administrative Assistant position until June 2022. Given the precarity of the situation and short nature of the contract and also the workload expected with the upcoming General Assembly, FYEG offered a full-time contract to Milan. Julie is planning to come back to work in June.



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Interns:

FYEG hosts two part-time internships each semester. In Fall 2021, Milan Zlatanovic joined the team as Project Intern and Christina Kessler joined the team as Communications Intern. Unfortunately, we had some issues regarding acquiring Milan's work permit. He had to do some of his internship in Serbia while waiting for his permit to be approved. But in the beginning of 2022, Milan Zlatanović's internship was prolonged through a 3 months replacement contract for the Administrative Assistant position.

Christina Kessler got an offer from the European Green Party to join them as assistant to the Secretary General, which she accepted. This meant she had to leave FYEG earlier than expected, in January 2022. We are always happy to see FYEG interns get jobs in the Green family or in other political areas, therefore we were very supportive of Christina's decision.

In Spring 2022 Robin Ehl and Marco Piana joined FYEG Office as project intern and communications intern, respectively.

Administrative Grants and Fundraising:

It is the Secretary General's responsibility to manage the administrative grants and oversee fundraising. We have applied for the European Youth Foundation (EYF) of the Council of Europe and Erasmus+ Grants and it has been approved for two years: 2022-2024. I also submitted the interim report of EYF Admin Grant. In 2021, we received an Erasmus+ grant. In 2021 we also received a Maribel funding, a funding that we used to fund our Administrative Assistant position.

Sometime in 2020, we applied for the European Youth Together project funded by the European Commission. This was our second time applying for this grant (first one was in 2018). The European Commission made a political decision and none of the pan-European youth networks received the funding. We received a very good mark on the project application but yet didn't receive the grant itself. Together with other European youth networks we relayed our concerns to the European Commission.

This decision of the European Commission has increased our doubts in the strategy of the Commission regarding the European youth work. It seems like the Commission made a political decision to support national youth organisations, rather than the European youth organisations and it is reflected in the financial support allocation.

Therefore in 2021, we started looking for other funding opportunities with other departments of the Commission and we applied for the Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values program. We received a score that was higher than the benchmark but because of the number of applications, we were put in the reserve list. We are still waiting to hear back.

In 2021, we also applied for the Erasmus+ grant again, for the year of 2022. The Commission has been very unreliable during this whole process. The call to apply for the administrative grant was put out in November, and we were given only one month to apply for this project. The project application was around 70 pages long and it required a lot of expertise in project application. The application was very competitive as around 110 organisations applied for the grant but only 30 of them were going to get awarded.



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The Commission was supposed to announce the results of the 2022 Operating Grants latest by 31st of March 2022 but they announced it on 22nd of April 2022. This situation has put the office under tremendous stress. We were not able to make any mid-term financial decision because of the uncertainty. In the European Year of Youth, as young people working for a youth organisation, we didn't know if we were able to do any activities or not. Moreover, the injustice of the situation and the position that FYEG and other youth organisations have found themselves in has been making me very upset. I have raised this issue with the European Youth Forum several times and I met other youth organisations on this issue. I have called the Head of Unit in the Commission and protested. Still, the injustice and the "what can we do" attitude against the power is making me miserable.

In the end, I am happy to announce that FYEG received one of the highest scores (89/100) and we received the grant. I am grateful for the FYEG staff and EC members in their support in writing this grant application.

Unfortunately many of our friends and allies have not received this grant. Moreover, this grant only covers the year of 2022. In a couple of months, we need to start the application process again for the next year and have to wait many months till we hear the results. I do not find confidence in the high mark we got in this current political climate as I know that anything can change. Therefore I am very worried about the future funding prospects. FYEG has savings to continue its operations, but of course we need to be a stable, durable and strong organisation with independent finances in order to fulfil our vision and mission.

In the long run, obviously we need to find alternative funding opportunities. I am proud of FYEG Office for all the applications we put forward and I hope I contributed somewhat to the common knowledge on funding - project application. However, project applications are very time consuming and require a lot of expertise. I am now more convinced that in this environment, if FYEG wants to continue to grow and expand, we need a fundraiser specifically working on this issue.

Representation at Partner Events

I have actively participated in the European Youth Forum meetings, especially to raise the funding issue among the YFJ membership. In fact in 2022 I took it upon myself to coordinate one of the meetings with YFJ members.

I met Green European Foundation's newly appointed Political Director and have attended GEF General Assemblies on behalf of FYEG.

In line with our agreement now FYEG is invited to attend the Group meetings of the Green Group in the European Parliament, however, following these meetings takes tremendous time. Therefore I seldom attend those meetings, only when there are political discussions where FYEG can provide input or receive input.

I also stopped attending the Group Communications meetings as it is the job of the Communications Officer. I try to attend the Strategic Communications meetings with the Group Sec-Gen.

Mostly the Co-Spokesperson are responsible for representing FYEG at EGP Committee meetings but I also took part when my support was needed.



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Support to FYEG Executive Committee and other FYEG Bodies

This year I have not attended most of the online FYEG Executive Committee meetings because I have been taking French classes on Monday evenings when the EC meetings happen. I attended all the offline Executive Committee meetings. Moreover, this year we had a lot more meetings with the co-spokespeople, which I found beneficial.

This year we have prepared a very nice welcome pack for all the EC members, which included all the information they needed for their mandate. I hope this enabled a smooth transition for the EC work.

Only three out of eight members of the EC were in the EC for the first time. Three EC members were in their third mandate, two of them were in their second mandate. The seniority of the EC has enabled us to move forward very fast with the organisational change process, strategy development, delegation orders. We were confident, we made decisions, we were efficient, we were resourceful.

Now, after three years, most of the positions are up for re-election again. And the elections will be competitive, which is very good! But it comes with a lot of responsibility for the FYEG delegates and member organisations to elect their leadership.

FYEG is growing and becoming more strategic and professional. The next year's budget is going to be around 100K EUR more than usual. The elections are going to happen in two years. We need competent, visionary, professional people who are able to take initiative and execute them. I really hope that the incoming EC will continue the great work of this EC in turning FYEG into a more strategic organisation with clear vision and goals and progressive political ideas for the future of Europe.

I would like to thank the Executive Committee and especially our-cospokespeople Eleanor and Stefanie for all their work. Every year I am blessed with the opportunity to work with amazing co-spokespeople, that I learn so much from. This was my two years working with Eleanor and from Eleanor I learned to be calm, I learned to be professional, I learned to be strategic. I tried to learn the British way of writing e-mail but you can't take the directness out of the Eastern European. From Stefanie, I learned to care, I learned to rethink, I learned to let go. I was blessed with amazing laughs and shared love for good coffee, good food and sun. From both of them, I learned politics, I learned managing relations with partners, I learned compassion, I learned solidarity. When I went above my head, they rightfully warned me - which is so, so, so appreciated as I love to learn from mistakes. When I ranted, they listened to me. When I failed, they supported me. They put three years of their life into this organisation, sometimes at great personal costs. And, from the bottom of my heart, on behalf of 50,000 FYEGers, thank you.

Let's continue the great work.

