

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2017-2018

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report is an outcome of the internal audit that took place on 10-11 of May, 2018 in the office of YEE in Toulcov Dvur, Prague. The audit was conducted by Vasiliy Bashutkin “Environmental Youth Clubs”, Russia and Zaruhi Stepanyan from “Khazer,” Armenia who acted in their personal capacity and not as representatives of their organisation. The auditors would like to express the words of gratitude to the Executive Board, the team of YEE Secretariat EVS volunteers for preparing all the documents and providing all the information necessary for conducting the audit in a smooth manner.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

2.1. Chairperson Stefan Rudel

Stefan is in the Board of YEE for the second year. Previous year he was the Vice-Chairperson and the External Relations Officer. Stefan, along with other Board members, was involved in the selection process of the Secretary General. Because of several issues (distance, language barriers, etc.), sometimes it was hard for him to stay in touch regularly with other Board Members and Secretariat. Stefan attended all the Board Meetings.

He also represents YEE in EEB and was involved in the preparation team of YEE project “Active Youth – Better Environment!”, attending the physical preparatory meeting, which gave him an opportunity to contribute to the work done by YEE more and to see where the active work goes on.

While travelling to YEE events Stefan mainly used environmentally friendly means of transport, as the place he lives is geographically convenient for using trains and his car while attending events in different parts of Europe.

2.2. Member Organisations Officer Ketevan Kochladze

Ketevan has been in the Board of YEE for the second year and mostly achieved goals that she set. She contributed to the selection process of a new Secretary General, represented organisation at external events. She accomplished her responsibilities within the position, took part and coordinated various work groups. As a result, Ketevan provided a great contribution by participating in virtual and physical board meetings (6 out of 7), projects and showed great involvement in some events like EuroDIG. She took part in YEE projects "Uniting Youth for Ecotourism" and "Youth exploring participation". She also was a great source for working groups. She could strengthen her networking skills and surely multicultural and communications skills as country mix of the board and office was quite different during her previous mandate.

Ketevan used various types of transportations, she had to use planes for long-distance trips, while she used eco-friendly means of transportation in her own country and therefore fully met YEE travel policy. Auditors believe, Ketevan could share her rich experience and good practices with future YEE Board if she remains a member of the executive board, perhaps within a new position.

2.3. Treasurer Aram Mnatsakanyan

As the Treasurer of YEE Aram gathered information and resources about the potential funders which will be helpful for YEE in a long term. He, along with the fundraising work group, is currently working on the letter to be sent to the potential funders, which is planned to be finished by the end of the mandate.

Since this was his first mandate in YEE Board and this form of the communication was new for him, Aram struggled with the miscommunication, however, he managed to help the Publications and Promotion Officer with the creation of YEE Wikipedia Page. The position gave him new experience, knowledge in project implementation and fundraising skills and he benefited a lot from it. During the year Aram missed only one Board Meeting.

Aram mainly used plane while travelling to YEE events, due to having no alternative of travel means from Armenia.

2.4. External Relations Officer Niall Barrett

It was the first year for Niall in YEE Board. As the External Relations Officer he tried to regularly refer to his Work Plan to make sure the points included in it are implemented. During his mandate Niall represented YEE at the European Youth Forum Council of Members, where he was involved in the discussions of the new Policy Paper on Sustainable Development. Niall was as well engaged with the Climate Action Network (CAN Europe), attended a number of webinars and represented YEE in the advocacy work group.

Due to the lack of time, Niall missed three Board Meetings and some of the points included in his Work Plan were not duly implemented (such as establishment and support of the Pool of Representatives) were not done.

Due to his permanent residence in Ireland he mainly used non-environmentally friendly means of transport while attending YEE and linked events.

2.5. Project Officer Jovana Mirjanić

For Jovana it has been her second term both in the role of Project Officer and on the Board of YEE generally. Being Project Officer, Jovana took part in project teams and organisation of two trainings. Jovana is particularly proud to see the initiative of the previous Board being executed this year. Together with other members Jovana could share her thoughts regarding the choice of the new Secretary General of YEE. She could also take advantage of

intercultural environment of the organisation to boost her competences and skills while taking decisions and participating in discussion-making processes. As a point for improvement we believe more active participation in fundraising issues of YEE could give Jovana new knowledge and skills.

Jovana participated in all meetings of the Board and chose transportation means according to the policies of YEE.

2.6. Publications and Promotion Officer Daniela Para

Daniela was newly elected member of the Board and therefore could learn much about our network, principles of decision making and split of responsibilities between board members, EVS volunteers and Office. She could participate in 3 out of 5 virtual board meetings. Auditors are particularly happy about results in Instagram account of the organisation and first results in terms of subscription (more than 100 in Instagram). Daniela analysed statistical data across the platforms to see the dynamics. She significantly contributed to the work group dedicated to creation of promo videos. Daniela used transportation according to YEE policies. We recommend Daniela to share and widen her knowledge with the next generation of YEE Board.

2.7. Summary

This year YEE Board was comprised of new and previously elected members and had a good geographical representation. Board members were actively involved in preparation and hand over process to the new Secretary General. Initial contribution to the organisation is highly appreciated by the auditors nevertheless we believe a little bit more contribution from the side of the Board and a bit more leadership could be made by the end of mandate. We are happy to see that many work groups have been arranged and its outcomes have been implemented. We'd recommend those members who could have willingness and availability to further contribute to the organisation and share the knowledge with a new generation of the YEE Board.

3. EVALUATION OF SECRETARIAT

All the office members noted that the atmosphere in the office is very friendly and respectful. The greatest challenge for the year 2017-2018 was the selection of the new Secretary General. All the members of Secretariat, Board and EVS were included in the process. The Auditors have noted that the procedure of selection of the Secretary General was inclusive and democratic, which gave an opportunity to choose the most suitable candidate. The transition period of the Secretary General was very smooth and calm for YEE and for the new Secretary General. Though, it was noted that in future, in case if there are additional funds available, it would be better to have the transition for a bit longer period than a month, which will help the new member of the Secretariat to get more used to the work and environment in the office.

It was noted that in some cases there were certain authorities while taking decisions. However, these situations were talked over and solutions were found within the members of the Secretariat.

It was also mentioned that clear guidelines for EVS volunteers have to be developed, in order to establish clearly what is their status in YEE: what are their rights and obligations, how they should take part in the daily work and in decision-making processes.

It was also noted that the team-building for the Board and Secretariat could be done better, in order to create a stronger team. In some cases, it was hard for the members of Secretariat to count on the Board as there was a miscommunication and some Board Members were not reacting to the e-mails, which made it harder for the Secretariat to arrange certain things.

Auditors also noted that though, according to YEE Statutes, YEE Board is the governing body of the organisation, there were cases when the authority of the Secretariat was higher than the one of the Board. Maybe this was due to the fact that the Secretariat was more experienced in certain issues, however, this point should be made clear from the very beginning of the mandate of Board Members, so that there are no misunderstandings later.

The auditors would like to suggest:

- to have regular retreats outside of the office area, which would help in the creation of a better team and strengthen the Secretariat.
- to have a longer Physical Board Meeting right after the election of the Board, which will make the new Board Members more connected between themselves, with the Secretariat and YEE itself.
- to have a longer team-building activities during the Physical Board Meetings.

In addition to the above mentioned, to have an explanatory session for the newly elected Board, which will help them to understand the structure of YEE better and to avoid further misunderstanding with the division of tasks between Board Members and Secretariat.

4. EVALUATION OF PROJECTS

The auditors decided to pick two projects for a detailed scrutiny: Training Course “International Environmental Action Days” and Strategic Partnership “Environmental challenge accepted”. The two chosen projects represented two different types of activity and were conducted by different organising teams.

4.1. Training Course “International Environmental Action Days”

The main aim of the project was to provide space for environmental youth organisations to share their experience and develop various competences needed for successful environmental campaigns.

The project was held in Helsinki, Finland and was co-organised by Luonto-Liitto. Based on the information available to the auditors, the project was organised according to YEE policies: the food during the project was vegan, it was local, however due the geographical circumstances the majority of the participants had to use plane to get to the training venue. However, most of the participants noted that the venue was very suitable for an environmental project. It was funded by Erasmus+, the funds were managed and well distributed between budget lines by Luonto-Liitto.

According to the evaluation made by the participants, the project reached most of its objectives, giving the participants both theoretical and practical skills. Most of the participants noted that the experience and knowledge they gained during the training will be used during their further work in their organisations.

During the project some of the sessions were delivered by experts. The participants noted that some of the presentations were very interesting, whereas the others were not prepared neither delivered well.

It is also worth mentioning that the visibility of the project was well thought of and the information was shared not only among YEE member organisations but as well in local media.

Taking into account all the above mentioned, the auditors think that the project was quite successful in reaching its main goal, however for the upcoming projects the auditors advise the project team to be more careful when choosing the experts, to pay more attention to their background and skills.

4.2. Strategic Partnership “Environmental challenge accepted”

This was a Strategic Partnership between Latvia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania and Portugal which lasted for more than a year. The main aim was to explore innovative approaches for development of youth active citizenship by fostering youth ability to convince stakeholders of the need to implement their proposed solutions for environmental protection.

The organiser of strategic partnership was BALTA DABA, and the role of YEE in this project was to promote the project on the international level. The role of other partner organisations was to work on local environmental issues. During the project there were three physical meetings organised: in Estonia, Portugal and Latvia.

The main aim of the project was reached and after the project there were several ideas which varied from local actions to international campaigns and informative videos. Except the three physical meetings an international competition was organised, which was evaluated to be successful. There was a partnership with Patagonia, which helped to promote the project. It was also noted that the cooperation between the partners was very smooth and respectful, which also had an influence on the final outcome of the project.

The project was complying with YEE policies only to some extent, as food provided during the meetings included the meat option as well. However, the auditors noted that except the meeting in Portugal (due to geographical reasons), the travel to the meeting was fairly environmentally friendly.

Concluding the above mentioned, since YEE was not the main coordinator of the training, it would be difficult to influence the project team to organise the project according to YEE policies, however the auditors would suggest to consider having more influence on the project team, as a partner, in order to promote YEE policies.

5. **AUDIT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF YEE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2019**

Having looked through “YEE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2019” we share our opinion regarding its fulfilment during year 2017-2018. Below we provide our comments to each of five main objectives and strategies:

Objective 1 - Reducing the ecological footprint of YEE and its activities

This objective has always been core for YEE activities. During execution of projects and in day-to-day office functioning there has been strong focus on minimisation of recourses’. Some participants of projects as well as members of the board sometimes used planes for transportation which has been justified by long distances to be covered. We believe that communication of sustainability priorities of YEE has been well communicated to all involved parties as well as in social media. We think that if any new means of saving resources are developed they can surely be implemented.

Objective 2 - Encouraging youth involvement in raising awareness about environmental issues

Many activities of YEE seek to inform participants of member organisation and other young people about issues of climate change, global warming as well as regarding the influence on the environment each of us makes every day.

Auditors recommend focusing a bit more on the issue of biodiversity loss and endangered species in further activities and projects. Raising awareness of new tools for environmental education can bring fresh ideas to youth how to decrease their regular impact on environment.

In our opinion, YEE empowers young people to be active in decision making at a European and local levels in the fields of youth and environment by sharing its knowledge and best practices, by giving its participants a chance to speak up at various international youth conferences.

Objective 3 - Empowering young people and building their capacities and skills

YEE office and board have made a big contribution to raising awareness among young people and youth organisations about the issue of climate change, global warming and promoting sustainable lifestyle among young people in Europe. Hereby, we mean active learning within projects, while representing YEE at external events, on digital platforms. In particular, launching Instagram are good examples. We believe that points of bringing

attention to the issues of biodiversity and development of new tools for environmental education could be a little bit more improved, for instance all the member organisations could be listed on YEE page at Wikipedia as well as it could be translated into more languages (only German version on the day of audit is available). Having spoken to EVS volunteers in the office we realised that they learn a lot as well as share their vision and ideas with office members in daily work and decision making.

Objective 4 - Enhancing the institutional, financial and programme sustainability of YEE

YEE office regularly issued newsletter every two months and also created the new design of it. Overviews of work, calls for participation, minutes, updates in the office and other useful information empowered knowledge transfer within YEE and outside of the network. There has been several working groups to improve the organisation (e.g. internal audit procedure). Board members, EVS volunteers and office members have gained and improved existing skills of multicultural communication and decision making, time management, self discipline. In particular we want to underline good start and fast adaptation of Mariam in the office.

Objective 5 - Strengthening the external relations of YEE

This year the idea of Pool of Representatives has not been worked at within a work group, which has been a priority of YEE during previous years. YEE was represented in external meetings by Board and office members. YEE was represented at the Council of Members of the European Youth Forum (YFJ). European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) (scheduled for 5th – 6th of June in Tbilisi) will boost visibility of YEE and will bring new ideas into our network.

6. SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO IMPROVE INTERNAL AUDIT

This year some changes to the procedure have been implemented thanks to “Internal Audit” work group. This year the audit was conducted in accordance with most of the remarks from the previous years. The auditors still find it a bit difficult to have a look through the external audit report as it is mainly in Czech language. Therefore, we’d recommend to elect someone who is familiar with Czech language for the next audit, or have prepared the translation in an advance.

7. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The work year of 2017-2018 has been rather a challenging one for YEE due to financial situation in the organisation. We could see a productive cooperation of the YEE Board and office. We particularly admire the contribution and involvement of EVS volunteers into various aspects of the organisation such as board meetings, daily tasks in the office, personal projects and etc.

In order to ensure the transfer of the knowledge we'd recommend to re-elect some of the board members for the new mandate. Particular attention should be dedicated to the choice of the Chairperson in order to fruitfully maintain cooperation between board and new co-workers in the office as well as to dedicate more time to the running issues of the organisation, which will not only help the Chairperson himself/herself to be more updated on the situation, but it will as well be helpful for the Secretariat, who will have a more active Board to support them and to take initiatives.

The Auditors advice to create new personal work plans in accordance with YEE Strategic Plan 2017-2019 and make sure that all the points are covered within the assignments. To make sure the implementation of all the points in the Work Plan, it is very important to be more realistic while planning, to refer to the Work Plan time to time during the year as well as to keep the active cooperation between the Board Members and the Office.

Additionally, the Auditors would advise the Secretariat to develop clear guidelines for the EVS volunteers which will help them to have a clear division of tasks in the office.