

Minutes YMCA Europe General Assembly 14. - 17. May 2015

- Place: Tallinn, Estonia
- Theme: Paths to Progress
- Participants: 130 participants, *including 50 participants of the YES seminar*, from 33 Member Movements and 3 Cooperating Movements were present. From YMCA Europe 9 staff members were present. List of participants is attached to the minutes (appendix 1).
- Guests:
- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Indian YMCA London | Gnanapirakasam Sundersingh |
| USA | Lori Swann, Tom Massey |
| Y's Men International | Poul V. Thomsen, Flemming Stentoft |
| World Alliance of YMCA (WAY) | Ian Green |
| YWCA Europe | Nina Meiling |
| YFJ | Marcio Barcelos |
| WOSM, European Regional Com. | Chip (Veerle Haverhals) |
- Apologies: Terry Ratcliffe, former YE President
Jan Nissen, former YE President
Peter Posner, former YE President
Dölf Weder, former YE Secretary General
Johan Vilhelm Eltvik, former YE Secretary General
YMCA Canada
Latin American and Caribbean Association of YMCA
- Devotions: The Devotions during the General Assembly were conducted by the Christian Orientation Group (COG) chaired by Marloes Meijer, assisted by delegates from Germany, Scotland, Lithuania and the Netherlands and by members of the European TEN SING Group (ETS).

1 Opening

Evert (Ed) Eggink, President of YE and Chairperson of the General Assembly welcomed those present to the General Assembly. He shortly looked back at past years General Assemblies under the theme "Roots and Leaves" and introduced this year theme "Paths to Progress" and programme of this General Assembly (GA).

Ed Eggink stated that the Assembly had been called according to §12 of the constitution. The Assembly was in quorum according to §14 of the Constitution. 28 out of 31 Member Movements with voting rights were present in person.

Not present members: Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Moldova

Not present cooperating YMCA movements: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nagorno-Karabakh, Montenegro.

2 Introduction of Delegates, Guests, Staff and Apologies

Ed Eggink introduced all guests and delegates in accordance with the list of participants and staff. Apologies were as listed above. He informed that there are two member movements present who have no voting rights at this moment: Italy and Switzerland.

He reminded those who could not be present and mentioned particularly John Knox (Scotland) who passed away in August 2014.

3 Greetings

The following delegates gave greetings to the General Assembly:

Poul V. Thomsen and Flemming Stentoft, Y's Men International and Y's Men Europe
Ian Green, World Alliance of YMCA
Lori Swann, Tom Massey, USA
Chip (Veerle Haverhals), European Regional Committee of World Organisation of the
Scout Movement (WOSM)
Nina Meiling, YWCA Europe
Gnanapirakasam Sundersingh, Indian YMCA London

4 Introduction to the Procedures

Ed Eggink gave a short introduction to the procedures of this assembly. Messages and announcements during the General Assembly will be presented by Simon Winther (Denmark) and Ivana Ilic (Serbia).

5 Adoption of the Agenda

Decision: The proposed agenda was adopted.

6 Message of the President

Ed Eggink reviewed his third year as president and working with the partly new executive committee and a very committed staff team under the leadership of Juan Simoes Iglesias. It continued to be challenging and encouraging.

Two years ago he focussed his message on "Inspirations", last year on "YMCA and Politics", and this year on "Governance, Challenges and the Mosquito". The National General Secretaries (NGS) forum became an important working platform within YE. The last NGS forum focussed on "Governance issues". Generally he observes a very good teamwork of staff and volunteers. It is challenging to observe that on various levels there are young people who do not seem to have a clear vision of their roles and responsibilities in YMCA governance. More attention for governance issues and related training may be useful..

An important decision already taken by the Executive Committee (ExCom) is the establishment of an YE office in Brussels (at this point only YMCA and YWCA are the ones out of big 6 youth NGOs who are not represented directly in Brussels, where all youth policy decision in Europe are taken). Youth unemployment still is a major challenge in Europe today, as well as the migration/refugees issue and the growing radicalisation of young people. We as YMCA are faced with these facts. In YMCA we can make a difference.

7 Adoption of the General Assembly 2014 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the General Assembly from 29.05.-01.06.2014 in Litomyšl, Czech Republic were approved as a true record of the meeting.

8 Secretary General's Speech/YMCA Europe Report 2014 and Work Plan 2015

Juan Simoes Iglesias, Secretary General of YMCA Europe presented his speech “A View of a Point and a Point of View”. A copy of the report is attached to these minutes (appendix 2).

Various remarks and questions from the plenary were shared and answered.

The annual report 2014 of Secretary General and work plan (implementation plan) 2015 have been presented.

The reports of YMCA Europe Programme Groups and working platforms included in the working documents were:

- European Sport YMCA (ESY)
- European TEN SING (ETS)
- European Jungschar and Scout Group (ESG)
- Volunteers for Europe Group (VfE)
- Representation and Youth Policy Group (YPG)
- Christian Orientation Group (COG)
- YMCA European Spectrum (YES)

Decision: The report and work plan of Secretary General and reports from Programme Groups, COG and YES were received.

9 Finances

9.1 Accounts 2014

Mike Will as treasurer of YMCA Europe presented the report about Income and Expenditures, and the balance sheet (General Administration).

Financial accounts to 31 December 2014

The actual result for 2014 has been concluded with a surplus of 12,00 Euros.

Balance Sheet (General administration)

The balance sheet as per 31 December 2014 concludes with 530.924,00 Euros.

Question from the plenary:

Sven Larsen, Norway:

Why are expenditures on programme decreasing? They should increase!

Treasurer responded:

Staff travels/meetings have been reduced due to cost reasons, if possible. Most projects are funded by external donors. These external contributions are lower now, and as a consequence the expenditures have decreased.

Proposal:

The 2015 General Assembly accept the financial accounts to 31 December 2014.

Decision: unanimously approved

9.2 Auditors' Report and Discharge of Executive Committee Responsibility

The external Auditors' Report was presented by Ed Eggink.

Decision: The Auditors Report was unanimously approved.

Decision: The discharge of the Executive Committee was unanimously approved.

9.3 National Contributions 2016-2019

Mike Will presented the proposal for National Contributions for the years 2016-2019.

Since 2012 National Contributions have been frozen. During the past two years a workgroup reviewed the existing system for National Contributions and worked out a proposal for a new contribution system.

This proposal has been presented at and agreed on the past GA in 2014 in Litomyšl.

The Executive Committee now proposes for the period 2016-2019 National Contributions that will cover 75 % of YE core costs, not 100 % as originally discussed.

There have taken place many talks with national movements and with all of them agreements could be made. Mike mentioned that of course YE is open for negotiations if the situation in a member movements should change and the membership fee needs to be adjusted (reduced or increased).

Some remarks and questions from the plenary were shared.

Andreas Axelson, Sweden:

We should continue to work out criteria for the national contributions, review them constantly and adjust them, if necessary.

Paul Smilly, England:

Should associated members also pay a kind of symbolic membership fee?

Kerry Reilly, Scotland:

Can it be explained why a national movement is in one particular banding (transparency)?

Treasurer responded: Refers to results of working group. It would be great if national movements on their own initiative would contact YE, if there banding situation is going to change. As examples he mentioned that over the past years YMCA Iceland, YMCA Russia, YMCA Poland and YMCA Armenia agreed to pay a higher National contribution.

Oliver Berger, Switzerland:

*1. Thanked for this first step of transparency. The second step should be to give more details on criteria. Definitely more clarification is requested by Switzerland.
2. Raised the question if maybe an external expert judgement group would make sense? If you receive money - can you be independent? In the case of Switzerland he only can say that the fee is still a bit too high.*

Peter Jeffrey, England:

He advised to link the strategy with the finances and to develop a budget strategy. What is planned if this strategy period ends? What concept for the future we have?

Treasurer: Of course the aim is to cover the 100 % costs of the core budget through membership fees.

Proposal:

To accept the National Contributions for 2016-2019 as proposed by the Executive Committee.

Decision: The proposed National Contributions 2016-2019 were approved with 1 abstention.

9.4 Budget 2016

Mike Will explained the budget for 2016.

Remark from the plenary:

Irene Kuling, Netherlands:

With regard to the new strategy, also in future budgets there should be laid focus on special efforts and impact on programmes and projects.

Proposal:

To accept the proposed budget for 2016.

Decision: The proposed budget for 2016 was unanimously approved.

9.5 Re-launching of the Friends of YMCA Europe Campaign

The Executive Committee members Martin Winter and Birgir Assgeirsson worked out and presented the new Friends of YMCA Europe Campaign. There had been a previous campaign for the benefit of 3rd YMCA Europe festival.

The question now was, can we and how can we keep our “old” friends from that campaign, as well as how we can find new friends.

A new campaign leaflet has been distributed. The information is also available at the YE website. A list of donations was opened during the GA and some pledges were received.

10. World Alliance of YMCAs (WAY) and Global Co-operation

Ed Eggink reported referring to the report included in the working documents.

He thanked the team of WAY Executive Committee members and Ian Green for chairing the interest group which took part during this General Assembly. He also mentioned that all European WAY Executive Committee members are present in this Assembly: Otto Vainio (Finland), Peter Jeffrey (England), Mike Will (Scotland), Silvio Kraus (Switzerland), Ed Eggink (The Netherlands), Dorothee Pfrommer (Germany)-until 30.04.15.

Decision: The report was received.

Ian Green, WAY reported.

At the last World Council a new strategy has been adopted. It contains two key concepts: Youth Empowerment (core main strategic focus) and Movement Strengthening (strong and vibrant YMCA needed). A high amount of money right now is spent in Youth Empowerment, especially in the Change Agents project. In the field of Movement strengthening WAY works closely with the area movements. The “one million voices campaign” has been started (research on young people within YMCAs globally; 60 national movements participated; results available in fall 2015).

Ian presented the Youth Empowerment spaceship model. 200 Change Agents participated in the first cohort, about 150 Change Agents now in the second cohort. A third cohort is planned for the period 2017-2018. The area movements asked the WAY to spend some more time for evaluation and impact measurement of the first Change Agent period. WAY decided to use the momentum and to start directly with a second Cohort. Ian mentioned that YE is supporting the project, but is not actively running own Change Agent trainings this time. Therefore WAY is organizing own trainings in Europe (in Switzerland and Norway).

Movement Strengthening activities are coordinated by Michal Szymanczak and Selma Zaidi. At the moment WAY is involved in emergency assistance for YMCA Nepal. Regarding YMCA properties - WAY is looking for resources to take this into deeper consideration, using YMCA properties more efficiently and use them as part of branding. Ian advertised the staff placement programme in Geneva.

11. Reports on Movement Strengthening (MS), the YES Network and Christian Orientation Group

Stepan Cerny, Vice President YMCA Europe (YE) reported.

Movement Strengthening (MS) is a key element of what YE is doing. There are several tools and methods to strengthen movements. One very successful tool with a lot of impact on local level is the “Roots for Reconciliation Project”. Vardan Hambardzumyan, Executive Secretary of YE, presented the project (<http://rfr.ymcaeurope.com/>). Also YE helps and supports national movements in need. One recent example was the re-establishment of YMCA Portugal. Juan Simoes summarized the process of the establishment of the new YMCA Port.

But however in the existing YE strategy unfortunately MS did not really work out as the main and integral element for various reasons.

Prior to this GA a Movement Strengthening Conference took place. Participants were all leaders of YE programme groups, working platforms, field groups as well as the YE Executive Committee and YE staff. It has been an intensive conference with the main aim to analyze the outgoing YE strategy within the entire YE working structure and to brainstorm and collect essentials and aims for the new YE strategy. Some major outcomes were:

- Include a permanent analysis system of National Movements in the new strategy
- See the actual needs of young people and national movements and offer solutions
- Need for evidence based policy making
- YE should undergo itself an organizational consultation
- YE as interface for its members and people

Still three clouds/pillars are seen: Mission, Social Relevance and Institutional Development. This corresponds to the strategic pillars of WAY, but our focus should be laid more on a pan-European approach, instead concentrating only on minorities and peripheral areas in Europe. Also now it will be necessary to reformulate/redesign YE working fields (organizational and with regard to contents) and to develop a human resources development plan.

Stepan concludes with the vision to become a strong, healthy and balanced YMCA in almost every country in Europe. And if we compare countries and YMCAs existing in these countries, we can state that we still have space to grow.

Questions and remarks raised from the plenary:

Kerry Reilly, Scotland:

When we speak of “evidence based”, do we want to show strengths and opportunities, instead of just needs? And why just closed group was invited to this MS conference?

Vice president responded:

Yes, we should assess all the capacities of the movements, to be sure where one can help another. The MS conference included ExCom and staff, as well as chairs of YERT, Programme Groups and Field Groups, YES and COG. This group was invited to allow us to keep the debate within reasonable timeframe. The issues were followed up later at the GA interest groups and table talks to allow for an inclusive debate.

Ken Montgomery, England:

Speaking of “human resources development”, does that mean also possibly staff rearrangement?

Vice president responded:

Yes, staff rearrangement and development is needed in the new strategy.

Paul Smilly, England:

It would be important to carve out the outgoing strategy “what has worked out well, what not”, “what consequences does this have for the future” and to feed this into the process of elaboration of the new strategy.

Vice president responded:

Yes, an organizational consultation in YE is also necessary.

Report COG

Marloes Meijer reported.

COG is in a transformation and growing process. It is working on three headlines:

- Network to share knowledge, experience and inspiration. People who are experts on their YMCA and how it deals with faith related issues. Any interested persons please contact cog@ymcaeurope.com.
- Diversity in COG board. It is appreciated to have more diversity on the board, people from southern and eastern European countries, interested in inclusive Christianity, seminars on relevant issues and tangible questions, and to help young leaders to realize an inclusive society.
- Together with YES organize a seminar from October 7-11, 2015 in Cluj, Romania on religion, race, gender, sexuality, generational learning, youth unemployment and open, nonviolent communication, working on key competencies that prepare one to be a leader in an inclusive society.

Marloes encouraged sharing experiences with the kingdom of God in YMCA on Facebook or via cog@ymcaeurope.com. She reminded that “Inclusive Christianity” was the key note topic at last year’s GA and reminded some questions: YMCA - open membership - christian leadership!? How do we react on this? It is always good to speak about this. Interreligious dialogue. Big funds not available for faith related projects - Why is this so, still today? The Paris Basis - part of our constitution!? Or not? Who knows the Kampala principles? Challenge 21? There are different knowledges among us. The conversation need to be kept open.

Viktor Serbulev (Ukraine) shared a story from his YMCA. Paul Smillee thanked COG especially for its long-term commitment in organizing the devotions at GA.

Report YES (YMCA European Spectrum)

A new YES board has just been elected for the next two years:

Tinna Rós Steinsdóttir (Iceland), chair

Iuliia Pustovoit (Ukraine), vice chair

Maria Pronina (Russia)

Alice Firbank (England)

Chris Richards (Wales), recorder

The outgoing board members were thanked for their engaged involvement in the YES network by the GA: Marisa Vögele (Germany), Andre Kpodonu (England), Adela Lakatos (Romania).

Report Nomination Committee (NC)

James Reilly reported.

In 2016 elections for YE Executive Committee will take place. On behalf of NC he asked all national movements to take home this message and to think about appropriate candidates for elections. 16 weeks before the 2016 GA nominations need to be submitted. The NC will come back to all National Movements later this year.

12. General Assemblies 2016 and 2017

Pedro Fueyo, Alba Ayuso and Nadine March Wischniewski in the name of YMCA Spain officially invited YMCA Europe’s General Assembly 2016 (Thursday/Sunday 5.-8.5.16) and the next YES seminar to Spain.

Ed Eggink informed that Executive Committee received another invitation for the GA 2017 (Thursday/Sunday 25.-28.5.17). Most likely it will take place in Scotland.

13. Any Other Business

Table talks on YE new strategy

Martin Winter presented first results from the strategy building (appendix 3).

All papers, statements, results from all workgroup sessions are collected. National movements and GA participants will kept informed in the further process. He thanked all facilitators for their work in this process.

The key note speech was presented by Marcio Barcelos, YFJ.
(Some notes taken by Recording Secretary - appendix 4)

Market Place of YMCA Europe:

1. Eva Tschornova (YE) presented:

European YMCA staff conference from 23.-27. September 2015 in Hesinki, Finland
<http://ymcaeurope.com/european-ymca-ywca-staff-conference-helsinki-2015>

2. Volker Kamin (Germany) presented:

European YMCA treehouse building training from 11.-18.07.2015 in Michelstadt, Germany
www.cvjm.de

And invited to the next European YMCA youth leader training including a treehouse project from 23.-30. July 2016 in Michelstadt, Germany.
More information: g.luecking@cvjm-westbund.de

3. Simon Winther (Denmark) presented:
“Wonderful Days Festival” from 03.-08.07.2016 in Denmark
International participants are welcomed. Interest should be indicated before 01.07.2015 (for Erasmus+ grant application)
More information: <http://wonderfuldays.com/>

4. Beate Turck (Germany) presented:
European Event in August 2017 in Wittenberg, Germany
More information: www.cvjm.de

5. Maria Winter presented:
European Youth Unify conference from 15.-21. August 2015 in Lubin, Poland
More information: www.ymcaeurope.com
She invited to the next European Unify Conference from 25.-28. February 2016 in Switzerland.
More information: <http://ymcaeurope.com/european-unify-conference-2016>

6. YMCA Port presented:
Information about their sport/fitness work.

14. Thanks and Closing Remarks

Juan Simoes Iglesias and Ed Eggink made some closing remarks and thanked all delegates, volunteers and staff for their contributions, especially Eva Tschornova and Adam Rychlik, and all volunteers and staff being great hosts.
Furthermore they thanked the planning team (staff, ExCom, ETS, COG, YES) and Executive Committee, the key note speaker, the table talk facilitators, the interest group leaders, the YES planning team and all YES seminar participants with all their enthusiasm and visions for the future, as well as the *announcers: Simon Winther (Denmark) and Ivana Ilic (Serbia)*.

Also thank you to the Christian Orientation Group for the thoughts of the day and the devotions and the TEN SING music team, and our staff.

Juan Simoes asked every delegate to respond in the online evaluation form.
The General Assembly was closed by Ed Eggink.

Tallinn, Estonia
May 2015

Evert Eggink
(President)

Beate Turck
(Recording Secretary)

Appendices:

- 1) List of participants
- 2) Report Juan Simoes, SG “A VIEW OF A POINT & A POINT OF VIEW”
- 3) Results table talks on new YMCA Europe strategy
- 4) Notes from Key note speech of Marcio Barcelos, YFJ