

BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

- SHARING BEST PRACTICES

EUROPEAN SECRETARIES' REPORT 1998/99

to the

EAY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, MAY 1999

INTRODUCTION (by Doelf Weder)

Dear Friends

It has almost become a tradition that the report of the European Secretariat comes in two parts. This year, it even comes from two different speakers, focusing both on our Assembly theme: "Building on our Strengths - sharing best practices".

My task is to look back on the past years and tell you what I consider the most important strengths of the European YMCA family. No success stories, no problems or challenges. Only: What are our strengths, on which we can build for the future?

Then comes our star speaker this morning: Johan Vilhelm Eltvik, Secretary General of the EAY as from October of this year. He will share with us his vision of the future of the EAY, based on where we are today.

PART I:

OUR STRENGTHS AS EUROPEAN YMCA FAMILY (by Doelf Weder)

What then are our strengths as European YMCA family? What would *you* say?

My underlying assumption is that we produce good and sustainable results because we base on a strong vision and valid principles - and on committed people with love in their hearts.

Strength No. 1: A common challenge and a common vision

Did you also follow Piccard's flight in a balloon all around the Earth? Fascinating, wasn't it? Piccard and his crew had set themselves a bold challenge and they developed a vision of how to meet it.

Our big challenge has the number of a year: 1989 - when the Iron Curtain fell down and Europe changed dramatically. We then developed the vision of a strong, truly All-

European YMCA movement. And since then, the development of YMCA work in Central and Eastern Europe has never ceased to be our agenda item number 1.

But it never was the only uniting item either. The Programme Field and the Christian Orientation work for example expanded considerably during these years, too. The European YMCA family grew together strongly, both in awareness and in action.

In two strategic five-year plans we laid out our common vision, our guiding principles and our goals, as well as how to reach them.

And we became much more determined than in the decade before, that we wanted our European YMCAs to be two main things:

- a) Christian movements, and
- b) youth centred movements.

This is our strength number 1: We have a clear common challenge and a clear common vision. You remember:

"If somebody has a dream, it is only a dream.

But if two or three dream together,

it is the beginning of something new."

Strength No. 2: The Field Group and Partner Group System

In autumn 1990, shortly after my start as European Secretary, we were confronted with an enormous difficulty: With then only two European staff (Regula and myself) and without money we should support the development of around 10 emerging National Movements.

It was clear: We needed to heavily involve the human and financial resources of our National Movements as well as those of our old friends USA and Canada. Several of them were strongly interested in partnerships. Some had already started in that direction.

But then Rolando Dalmas from the World Alliance made me aware of the problems with bilateral partnerships: the danger of well meant, but one-sided influence, of dependencies and dominating imbalance. He gave sad examples from all around the World and argued for a multi-lateral approach. Only: how could one multi-laterally composed EAY Committee ever be able to cope with so many different situations?

The solution was worked out in October 1990 here in Melun, France, when we met with the heads of the European YMCA World Services: The EAY Field Group and Partner Group system was designed. It combines the best of two worlds: the traditional bilateral partnerships put into the context of a multi-lateral, self-governing group approach. This way, good and strong contributions automatically balance each other, create considerable synergistic effects and lead to a natural empowerment of the local people.

This concept has in the meantime proven its high value and is today also discussed as a model for other situations in the YMCA world.

Thus, our strength number 2: The Field Group and Partner Group System.

Strength No. 3:
The concept of "Begleitung" (walking side by side)

The next big challenge came in April 1991. Bob Copleton, then EAY Treasurer, and myself were called to Chicago on short notice. There, our American friends told us that the US Government had granted 1.5 million US\$ for the development of YMCA work in five countries of East Central Europe. The Saphir Initiative was born.

The original idea was that one would gather the most successful programme know-how from all around the World. One would organise Programme Institutes and train the emerging leaders. And then grant seed money for local programme implementation.

But, we asked, who guaranteed that these ideas would actually work and be relevant in Central and Eastern Europe and its long pre-communist YMCA history? Who would help to adapt these programmes to the local situations? What about these countries' own ideas? What about meaningful Needs Analyses and adequate response to their findings? And who would assist these National Movements in developing their own institutions and their leadership?

Our American friends, especially Bruce Knox, then Director of the Office for Europe, proved to be open and flexible. The venture developed into an outstanding long-term partnership between the YMCA of the USA and the EAY. This partnership is still continuing and bearing rich fruits.

Under the Saphir Initiative, the first two EAY field workers could be employed in 1991, among them a man called Johan Vilhelm Eltvik from Norway.

The challenging discussions around the Saphir Initiative forced the EAY to work out its concept of "Begleitung": To walk side by side with National Movements, empowering them and giving them the full responsibility for their own development - including the right to make mistakes. And to resist all temptations to execute undue influence from the outside.

This needs a strong process-orientation and often enormous patience and long-term thinking. But it creates trust and has proven to produce truly indigenous and sustainable development. "Begleitung" represents a modern, holistic and empowering development approach, far away from the traditional project philosophy. The concept is today known and appreciated throughout the YMCA world.

"Begleitung" became our strength number 3.

Strength No. 4:
Training the Trainers

The EAY was very early aware that Leadership Development is key to all development work, and we always carried out respective activities, for example through the 5+2 Initiative.

But the real break-through came only in 1995 with the EAY Development Initiative, when the current Training the Trainers scheme was started.

The approach focuses on working on EAY level with trainers, enabling them to train their people themselves back in their countries. This year, the methodology will be expanded to the Training of Programme Developers.

In the years since 1995, the programme produced a considerable pool and network of qualified YMCA trainers, on which we can draw whenever we carry out leadership development.

Therefore our strength number 4: Training the Trainers.

Strength No. 5:

A big, committed, competent and multi-cultural group of YMCA volunteers and professionals

What would all these concepts and principles be without committed, competent people, who actually carry them out?

In the case of the EAY, this is by nature and by purpose a multi-cultural group. Because this is what Europe is, and it helps us to understand and to work with the many different cultures and people in Europe.

Over the years, I had the privilege of working with very dedicated and competent professional EAY staff from eleven different countries. I want to most sincerely thank each and all of them for their enormous contributions and for their personal friendship. Standing for all of them, I only mention our faithful Regula Sandgaard-Leumann, carrying responsibility for the St. Gallen office since its opening in 1990; and of course Johan Vilhelm Eltvik, a great man and my successor. In practice already since many years the co-leader of the EAY.

But it is also the virtually hundreds of volunteers and supporters who serve in so many different capacities, groups, committees and networks. And then all of you, our National Movements. I do not even make the attempt to list all the great and faithful contributors and friends. Any start would leave out too many with not less valuable contributions.

Representing all of them and all of you, I only name the two great Presidents and the two fine Treasurers who worked with us during these years: Terry Ratcliffe and Jan Nissén, Bob Copleton and Peter Posner.

It is simply enormous, what they and so many others contribute to our YMCAs. Thank you so much!

All of you together are our precious strength number 5: A big, committed, competent and multi-cultural group of YMCA volunteers and professionals.

Strength No. 6:

Love for people and mutual sharing

This last strength of ours is very close to my heart. Genuine love for people is simply the basis for it all. We all are part of intensive mutual sharing as YMCAs and as persons and friends. I believe because we simply love people.

All YMCA work is and must be based on love. On God's forgiving love for ourselves, and on our own love for others. "No man is an island" (John Donne). No woman is an island. And: "Nothing is real until it is local." "Nothing is real until it becomes personal."

Mutual sharing is the consequence of love and means to open our hands for giving and receiving. This was the theme of our General Assembly 1993, down in Thessaloniki, Greece: "Facing My Neighbour with Open Hands".

I would like to close this, my last European Secretary's report, with the story I wrote for that Assembly 1993. All who already know it, may excuse me.

This story became more and more precious for me over the years. I wrote it as a parable of the YMCA. And then I discovered that in many respects it is becoming more and more also a parable for my own life: "The Clown".

The Clown

(by Dölf Weder)

Once upon a time,

there was a lovely clown.

One of these good, cheerful clowns with a big, red nose,

with wide, colorful trousers around his legs

and with a small, brown violin in his hands.

On his face, he always had a big, warm smile.

He lived and worked in a circus.

Not a big circus, and not a small circus.

But a circus and a clown loved by the people,

especially the young people.

Times were not always easy for this circus.

There were times of recession and economical difficulties.

Sometimes the clown was afraid

the circus would no longer be able

to have its own tent,

or even some artists might have to be sent away.

What would happen to the people then?

He knew that circuses and clowns are needed.

The clown, for many people in the towns around,

was a symbol of hope and joy and humanity.

Hope, joy and humanity in the middle of a not always easy everyday-life.

A life in which the strongest and the best and the fittest succeeded.

But people know

that not everybody

is the strongest, and the best, and the fittest.

The clown showed them what really counted in life.

He showed them that you can love and be loved,

even if you are weak,

even if you fall on your nose,

even if you sometimes cry.

People loved the clown and his big, warm smile.

And he loved them.

But there was one big sadness in our clown's life.

He got more and more aware

that he was so limited in his thinking and experience.

His thoughts only circled around in his limited circus circles.

*And with every passing year he had more difficulty
to develop new ideas,
to show his spectators the many sides of life.*

While people still loved him,

he knew he should give them more.

He should open their eyes to the bigger world.

He should open their eyes to the many people in this world.

To the people who think and live differently from them.

To the people who suffer from injustice and poverty.

To the people who would like to share

their gifts and their human warmth with them.

He knew:

Life was much more than life in this circus.

Life was much deeper than he had experienced so far.

And so, one day, our clown decided to go on a journey.

He had heard there was a man called Jesus.

And people had told him

that Jesus lived life in its fullness,

and that He loved and was loved.

That's what our clown was looking for:

life in its fullness,

to love and to be loved.

And so he took his rucksack

and packed into it

his small, brown violin,

his wide, colorful trousers,

and his big, red nose.

And with the violin, the trousers and the nose in his rucksack,

he directed his steps to the East, to Galilee,

to find Jesus.

When wandering through the lands,

it was not long before he met a gipsy girl.

Her long black hair hanging over her dark brown face,

she was sitting beside the road and crying.

"I'm a foreigner in this country", she said,

"and because I'm not like the others,

I'm cast out.

I'm allowed to work here, but not to live."

The clown laid his arms around her shoulders

and cried with her.

But then he took his small, brown violin

and gave it to the girl.

"Take it and play it", he said,

"and let its sound comfort you

and the hearts of all suffering people around you."

Wandering further through the lands,

it was not long before he met a mother with three children.

Holding the youngest at her breast

and the other two in her arm,

she was sitting beside the road and crying.

"Injustice, poverty and brutal war", she said,

"have taken our father and everything;

my children must now live naked."

The clown laid his arms around her and the children's shoulders

and cried with them.

But then he took his wide, colorful trousers

and gave them to the family.

"Take them and use them", he said,

"they are big enough to give clothes

for all three of your children."

Wandering further through the lands,

it was not long before he met a young man.

Having his head on his knees,

he was sitting beside the road and crying.

"I'm unemployed and cannot find a job", he said,

"nobody needs me,

and I'm worth nothing."

The clown laid his arms around his shoulders

and cried with him.

But then he took his big, red nose

and gave it to the young man.

"Take it and put it on your nose", he said,

"and I will teach you

how to be a good and human clown".

Finally, after many weeks and months,

our clown arrived in Galilee.

He went to Nazareth,

knocked at Jesus' door

and walked into His house.

A man was sitting in the room.

"Are you Jesus?", asked the clown,

People told me that Jesus lives life in its fullness,

He loves and is loved".

"Dear friend", responded the man,

"Jesus died 2000 years ago,

you cannot meet Him here."

The clown broke out in tears.

"Then my whole journey was in vain.

And my life will continue

to circle around in my old, limited circus circles."

"Don't be sad", answered the man,

"you've already met Jesus three times on your way here.

Whenever you meet a person and open your hands,

you also meet Jesus.

And you make an experience of fullness of life,

you love and you are loved."

The clown stood there,

surprised and silent.

He dried his tears and started a smile.

But then, after a further thought,

he sadly answered:

"But now all my gifts have gone.

There's nothing left I could share.

"Your hands are empty", replied the man,

"because you faced your neighbours with open hands.

But love means giving and receiving.

And only empty hands can receive.

Open your hands for your neighbours again.

And your empty hands will be filled."

The clown opened his hands,

and the man gave him a wonderful Pan Flute.

"Take this shepherd's flute", he said,

"take it back to your circus.

And whenever you perform as a clown,

play one piece on this flute for your people.

Let them listen to the sound of eternity.

Let them listen to the sound of love.

Let them understand

that the world is much bigger than their circus.

Let them experience love and to be loved,

to receive and to give,

to give and to receive."

The clown stood there,

with the flute in his hands.

His heart felt warm,

and on his face he had a deep and happy smile.

"I will go back to my circus", he said,

"I will tell my people that I met Jesus.

I will blow my flute,

and we will face our neighbours,

with open hands,

to love and to be loved,

in the fullness of life."

PART II:

BUILDING OUR STRENGTHS FOR THE FUTURE **(by Johan Vilhelm Eltvik)**

Dear friends,

Some people invite friends to their homes or to a restaurant. That is nice. It is what I call ordinary, decent gray music. Dölf is more generous. He is creative and he plays the blue music to surprise people. He invites friends into his speeches.

In fact my friendship with Dölf started some 18 years ago in a small Swiss church where Dölf saw me and invited me up to the pulpit to share his speech with him. Now history repeats itself. This man is truly generous. The strength on which we can build today in the EAY is in so many important details built on Dölf Weder.

Next time we go to a restaurant, Dölf.

1. Grey music - blue music

I use these terms to symbolise among other things the two elements of YMCA-work, the systematic and the creative.

Grey music is necessary in order to build the YMCA for the future. I have played a lot of grey music in the EAY. The future holds much more of the same grey music for me. The term may sound negative. It is not meant negatively. Grey music is logical, systematic, hard work. Grey music is strategic plans, structures for the organisation, systematic training, time schedules, reports and budgets. We need it, and we need a lot of it. Without the grey music, we will have no frames, no structures, no future.

Blue music is the symbol of creativity, of surprise, of inspiration. Blue music is not in our power, we cannot force it or create it. Blue music is a gift, coming to us from far away. When you hear it, you know what it is and it makes your soul fly, enables you to do impossible things.

With grey music we build the house. With blue music we fill the house with life. I am proud of the YMCA, because this movement is full of blue music.

I am asked to share a vision of the EAY for the future. A vision is a dream which can become reality. So let us dream together for some minutes and try to hear the blue music which renews our motivation and gives us strength.

Even a speech on vision needs a grey structure. The foundation, the starting point, is our mission as the YMCA. For the EAY this mission is realised through international unity and interaction. Built on this foundation I will indicate three concrete visions. Then I will try to climb to the top of those visions and listen for the blue music, look for possible creative results, exciting goals for our common work.

2. Unity and international interaction

Three solid, grey blocks fill me with strong optimism for the future. These European Assemblies demonstrate a warm and friendly unity in the European YMCAs. We shall build upon this strength and further develop all the groups and committees and facilitate meeting places where our unity and interaction will be strengthened.

The fact that you last year unanimously decided to move the EAY-office to Prague, is a beautiful symbol of the project which I sometimes call to build a new European house in the YMCA.

The partnership with the YMCA of the USA is the second strong element. I am deeply grateful for this unique friendship. From the very beginning of the huge challenges in Central-Eastern Europe they have truly shared the burdens with us. There is a mutual understanding and trust between us which gives me great expectations for the future. Bruce, Dale, Phil, Jan - I salute you.

The third strong element is the World Alliance of YMCAs. I have been to my first meetings in Geneva and the team headed by Martin and Nick have opened the doors for the future co-operation in a way which already has created trust and confidence. For the future I see an EAY, which still has its independent structures, but is much closer to the World Alliance and the other areas. A team approach to the world agenda, lead by the World Alliance, is what I see developing.

3. Mission

We have a very strong foundation. We have also an extremely difficult world to face. In the WAY all of us together worked on our common Mission. What shall the YMCA look like for the future?

A good friend of mine from the Russian YMCA, Nikolay Kourotchkin, once gave me a picture of a beautiful, white monastery, built at the side of a wide river. The river gives movement to the picture, it is like life itself, running fast, never stopping for a second. Behind the monastery are dark clouds, like a storm is building up. On top of the church tower the cross is lifted up and makes the centre-point of the picture.

This picture hangs over my desk. For years now it has reminded me of the troublesome times for the Russian people, struggling with all kinds of difficulties and challenges. Today this picture also reminds me of the dark clouds over Europe.

Trying to express a vision for the future of European YMCA, this is today made on the background of dark clouds, like a storm coming.

Still I find it deeply meaningful to express a vision of the YMCA also in times of darkness. I see a YMCA close to the river, close to life itself, lifting the cross towards the sky, the sign of hope, the sign of future behind all dark clouds, the sign of unity. People are looking for signs of hope. Are we giving it to them?

Let me take you down to Armenia for a few minutes. Two weeks ago the YMCA of Armenia organised a seminar about the Genocide, which took place in 1915, and where more than one million Armenians were murdered. The seminar was covered by all the main TV-channels in Armenia and helped giving a public profile to the YMCA.

One of the speakers was Alina Edelmann, a survivor from Holocaust. As a young girl she was smuggled out of the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw. A fascinating lady. I really would like to bring her to one of our meetings. She talked about human dignity.

I was given the impossible task to share Biblical perspectives on Genocide. A lot of young YMCA-people were there. Afterwards a young man came to me, struggling with his school-German, he wanted to express how important it was for him that the YMCA was

willing to go into the most difficult questions and not only offering sports and leisure time activities. «It has helped me in my struggle to find my identity as a young Armenian.»

Suddenly the blue music had touched me through the words of this young Armenian YMCA-man. And his words brought me back to the year 1989, a year which definitely changed my personal life. My identity changed a bit, opened up, included more. Then the painful pictures from the sufferings in Bosnia again changed my identity as a European. Around me I see nations in search of direction, whole societies struggling to find their way in a dramatically changed world. There is war in Europe.

I so much understood my Armenian friend. And I realised how many important questions people have when they meet the YMCA.

We need to remember that fact, because often they do not formulate their questions. Building of identity, for individuals and for societies, will be a major challenge in the years to come.

I have a prayer for the future of European YMCA, the most beautiful prayer in the Bible: «Guide me Lord, so that I can walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart, so I can fear your name.» (Psalms 86.11)

An undivided heart...

My vision, or my prayer for the future of European YMCA, is that we keep an undivided heart. We shall build together a new European house - a common identity. The truth of the future YMCA lies in an undivided heart. I see a European YMCA which is relevant to young people because it is not afraid of dealing with the most difficult challenges facing young people today. Not offering easy solutions. Most of the time we will just have to be there together with people, sharing the struggle and frustration, searching together for answers.

Between the dark clouds above and the river in front of us, as a Christian movement we are lifting up the sign of the cross.

We are definitely not a church. We are in the church, but not under the church. But as a Christian, Ecumenical Youth movement we are much closer to young people than most of the churches. Young people are searching for identity in a Europe wounded by rapidly growing nationalism, xenophobia, racism. These messages are spread with the speed of a flash light, and young people are asking: Are there no other alternatives, relevant to us?

Christian principles put into action is fine. But principles need to be reflected upon, to be discussed, to be studied. Principles are not just there, cut in stone. They come from somewhere, and they are influenced by the people practising them.

Therefore - we have a job to do - to redefine what Christian principles mean in the context of Europe today. To put new words to the Christian message.

Last year in Malta we struggled with Youth Spirituality. To me that was much more a signpost showing the way into the future than it was a goal reached.

The initiative coming primarily, not only, from France about Social Exclusion is another very important signpost for the future. We shall go down these roads, we shall struggle with the challenges, we shall fight with the obstacles. And doing so, our identity as YMCA

will change, our identity as Europeans will change, and it will make the YMCA relevant for a new generation.

«Guide me Lord, so that I can walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart so I can fear your name.»

4. Visions

I talk about grey music because I firmly believe that we need good plans and well built structures. But it does not mean that we shall build an empire. The EAY will remain a small operation, not a big institution. We will continue to have a small, but efficient administration. The rest will be light troops easy to move as the challenges change.

I talk about blue music because I believe it is a major force in our YMCA and sometimes it is difficult to define exactly what it is or to give it a name.

What happened with «Fryshuset», the Freeze House in YMCA Stockholm? Nobody believed in the crazy idea of turning an old freeze house into a youth centre for youth from the most difficult areas of the city. It was a lot of resistance. I visited this house and it was full of blue music. Skateboards, rock-music, dancing, theatre. And hundreds of youth with life in their eyes. I loved to be there.

What happened to my own local YMCA? One year we were only a handful of people there. Nothing really worked. I came back as an adult, and the house was packed with young people doing Ten Sing. School classes were cueing up, but there were not enough places. I call it blue music.

Blue music infuses life into people and organisations and make them grow. An important element of blue music is to give people space and time and independence to discover their own creative potential. Another element has to do with undivided hearts and love for people. Blue music is close to our mission.

I believe it is possible to facilitate for the blue music, and I will indicate three ways we will go to do so.

One is about programme resources, one is about human resources and the third is to create a base for both of them, a small resource centre.

4.1 Programme Festivals

Let me take you to the small Hungarian village Tiszadob, March 1992. 150 YMCA-leaders from all over the world, 120 of them from the re-established YMCAs of 5 Eastern European countries met to share experiences and visions for the future. The first programme festival organised together with Bruce and the YMCA of the USA. I shall never forget the picture of one big man from Togo marching through the Hungarian village in front of the ecological programme workshop with a tree in his hand. The tree is still there. Carlos Sanvee of the WAY was the man with the tree.

I had been against the whole idea, it was too expensive and I did not believe in it. Then the blue music touched the event, and it became a smashing success, a hit. People are still talking about it. And for myself a big learning experience.

In August we shall organise the second programme festival in Russia for 180 people and 5 new countries. It will be financed by the YMCA of the USA and the IMSS-funds from the WAY. USA, Russia and the EAY have developed this event in partnership. It is still expensive, but I firmly believe that it will mean a lot for the involved movements. Sharing experiences, sharing visions. Building friendships.

Could such a programme festival be imagined in Scandinavia? In the United Kingdom? In the Mediterranean region?

4.2 Trainers´ network

When Dölf mentioned Training the Trainers, I saw pictures flashing by of groups of young people very close to me. Always in circles, no tables, an open circle and a deep going process of change and growth. For all of us involved. It has been a most rewarding part of my work. Also the most intensive. These participants are important for the future of their YMCAs. Therefore we want to build a strong network where they can continue to grow and develop, as trainers, as people, as YMCA-leaders for the future.

It started as a school for leaders of the re-emerging YMCAs. More and more we have included the rest of Europe into the training, and last time we even had two Africans and two Latin-Americans included.

A high number of our participants have stayed with the YMCA for years now, a handful of them have become National Secretaries, some programme secretaries and a lot of local secretaries. And of course the whole staff of the EAY from November first are participants from TTT.

We believe that this training concept is an important tool for our future human resource development. I want to pay tribute to my former colleague Michael Wardlow from Belfast who taught me this concept many years ago.

Therefore it is important for us to keep the network together also for the reason that we will spread the concept and the experience.

Soon we will be able to offer a few small teams of trainers from this network who are able to present and facilitate the Training the Trainers concept in other countries. This is of course a question of money, but also a question of motivation. Do we see the need for such a network of trainers? Are the old and established YMCAs of Europe motivated to participate in such a scheme? Can we offer concrete training opportunities where we could use these trainers? Will you send you young leaders for the training?

Have a talk with the people in this Assembly who belong to the network. For me they represent blue music for the future.

4.3 Training Centre

The YMCA-centre in Mainau was an important symbol of the European YMCA until the late sixties. It has been a dream for years to have such a small centre somewhere in Europe as a meeting place, as a resource centre, as the face of the EAY.

Five years ago we presented this vision again for the EAY Assembly. Since then we have patiently kept the vision alive, the re-emerging movements have asked for it, the network of trainers say that we need it. I am convinced that such a face of the EAY will do the movement good. It could contain a library and a resource centre for training and programme development, it could be combined with a YMCA hostel for travelling YMCA groups, and it could offer a venue for EAY committee meetings and training courses.

It is still only a dream. My concern has always been that the EAY can never afford to buy and run such a centre.

There has been developments, though. Through our friends in the Czech YMCA we are in negotiation with the Czech government. They may give a small camp just outside of Prague to the Czech YMCA for free. The Czech YMCA invites the EAY to run its EAY centre in this camp. It will be an international training centre and hostel, but the ownership will be Czech. The Danish Y's Men have fund raised 100 000 SFR to renovate the place and together with the Czech YMCA they want the EAY to run this centre there. It will also be used for the Czech YMCA and for the Y's Men.

It is a very, very generous situation offered us by our friends. Practically no financial risks. It is still a dream. We may have to be patient for more years. But this is a dream with a sound of blue music attached to it.

Dear friends! It was difficult to make this shorter. As you will understand, there is a lot of hard work and solid grey music in front of us to realise these dreams.

Before we go into discussions and work, let us rest for some minutes and listen to the blue music. It happened at some occasions during the previous years that Dölf and I hit some grey walls with our heads. There were crisis and obstacles big enough to take our courage and motivation away for a short time. But then there was always this blue music. It has a tendency to touch you also in the darkest moments.

It fills you and renews you and give you this crazy idea that you can do the impossible - you believe you can fly.

Blue music is the beautiful voice of God, when he stretches his hands towards us to lift us up and give us new courage and strength.

I believe we can fly...

St. Gallen/Oslo, May 1999

Dölf Weder/Johan Vilhelm Eltvik