
RURAL YOUTH EUROPE

Annual Report 2017

Rural
youth
europe

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Rural
youth
europe

Dear friends and members of Rural Youth Europe

On behalf of the board of Rural Youth Europe I submit the Annual Report for the year 2017 for your attention. The report outlines key activities and achievements of Rural Youth Europe during this period.

The General Assembly took place in Tallinn, Estonia on 9th September 2017, right after the new initiative of a Conference.

The Board saw some changes at the General Assembly with Paddy Delaney, Group 1 representative, and Katlin Merisalu, Group 4 representative, stepping down from their roles after successful terms. I would like to thank both Paddy and Katlin for their hard work and commitment during their mandates. Linzi Stewart from YFCU, Northern Ireland and Aris Brencis, of Latvian 4H, were elected onto the board as representatives for Group 1 and 4 respectively.

Changes took place to the staff team in Helsinki too which has enabled the organisation to continue to respond to the needs of its members and future aspirations. You can read about all of the above and more in the pages that follow.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, the members, for your active participation throughout the year. Your continued support and contribution ensures the success of our events, and your support for the development opportunities for your grass-roots members helps shape the future leaders of rural youth across Europe.

Rural Youth Europe owes particular gratitude to the European Youth Foundation, The Youth department of the Council of Europe, the Education, Culture and Audiovisual Executive Agency of the European Commission via its Erasmus+ programme, and of course sponsors from your own countries for their continued support which is so vital to the success of our events.

As I approach the end of my term as Chairman I reflect on my time on the board and I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to have been involved with such a fantastic youth organisation. I have been so inspired by the work of rural youth since my first Rural Youth Europe event in Strasbourg in 2011, and will be leaving my role with many new skills, better knowledge, a lot of great memories and above all many wonderful friendships. As ever the Rural Youth Europe calendar is bursting with fantastic events for 2018 and beyond and the future of Rural Youth Europe is bright. I know the incoming board will strive to deliver effective and efficient training, continually evolving established events and developing new ones in response to the wants and needs of our members.

May I take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support throughout my time as Chairman and wish you all the best in the future.

With best wishes,

Russ Carrington

Rural Youth Europe Chairman 2016 – 2018

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2 BOARD AND SECRETARIAT

Chairman	Russell Carrington (England) 01.01.17 – 31.12.17
Vice-Chairman	Sebastian Lassnig (Austria) 01.01.17 – 31.12.17
Board Member UK and Ireland (Group I)	Paddy Delaney (Ireland) 01.01.17 – 09.09.17 Linzi Stewart (Northern Ireland) 09.09.17 - 31.12.17
Board Member Central Europe (Group II)	Julia Müller (Germany) 01.01.17 – 31.12.17
Board Member Northern Europe (Group III)	Mikko Välitälo (Finland) 01.01.17 – 31.12.17
Board Member Eastern Europe (Group IV)	Kätlin Merisalu (Estonia) 01.01.17 – 09.09.17 Aris Brencis (Latvia) 09.09.17 - 31.12.17
Special Interest Board Member	Geoff Thompson (Northern Ireland) 01.01.17 – 31.12.17
Interim Secretary General	Jenni Heinonen (Finland) 01.01.17 – 31.12.17
Education and Fundraising Manager	Pia Nurmio-Perälä (Finland) 01.01.17 – 31.12.17
Media and Communications Coordinator	Elina Mäkelä (Finland) 01.08.17 – 31.12.17
Graphic Designer	Julia Hentz (Slovenia/Hungary) 01.01.17 - 31.12.17

3 MEMBERS

Contacts with the Rural Youth Europe (RYEurope) Member Organisations are maintained through statutory meetings and events. The RYEurope webpage, social media, monthly e-news, e-mail, phone and Skype are used to maintain the cooperation between meetings. If there is an opportunity or specific need, Member Organisations are visited by Board Members or the Secretary General. Membership numbers provided below are as per returns for 2017 fees.

GROUP I



National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC)

YFC Centre, 10th street, Stoneleigh Park,
Kenilworth CV8 2LG, UK (England)

www.nfyfc.org.uk

(18726 members)



Macra na Feirme

Irish Farmcentre Bluebell, 12 Dublin, Ireland

www.macra.ie

(5517 members)



Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster (YFCU)

475 Antrim Road, Belfast BT15 3BD UK (Northern Ireland)

www.yfcu.org

(3200 members)



Scottish Association of Young Farmers' Clubs (SAYFC)

Ingliston Young Farmers' Centre, EH28 8NE,
Edinburgh, UK (Scotland)

www.sayfc.org

(3617 members)



Wales YFC / CFFI Cymru

CFFI, Builth Wells, LD2 3NJ, Powys, UK (Wales)

www.yfc-wales.org.uk

(5650 members)

GROUP II



Landjugend Österreich (ÖLJ)

Schauflergasse 6, 1014 Wien, Austria

www.landjugend.at

(93385 members)



Bund der Deutschen Landjugend (BDL) e.V.

Claire-Waldoff-Str. 7, 10117, Berlin, Germany

www.landjugend.de

(100000 members)



Agricultural and Rural Youth Association (AGRYA)

Váci út 134/c, VI/28, 1138, Budapest, Hungary

www.agrya.hu

(670 members)



Slovenian Rural Youth (ZSPM)

Celovska 43, 1000, Ljubljana, Slovenia

www.zspm.si

(3500 members)



Schweizerische Landjugendvereinigung (SLJV)

c/o AGRIDEA, Eschikon 28, 8315, Lindau, Switzerland

www.landjugend.ch

(2965 members)

GROUP III



Danmarks Landboungdom + Danish 4H

Agro Food Park 15, Skejby, 8200, Aarhus N, Denmark

www.landboungdom.dk

www.4h.dk

(6811 members)



Suomen 4H-liitto

Karjalankatu 2A, 00520 Helsinki, Finland

www.4h.fi

(47000 members)

Finlands Svenska 4H



Elisabetsgatan 21 B 12, FIN-00170, Helsinki, Finland

www.fs4h.fi

(3895 members)



4H Norge

Postboks 113, N-2026 Skjetten, Norway

www.4h.no

(12116 members)



Norges Bygdeungdomslag

Schweigaardsgate 34B, oppgang 2, 3. etasje,
Grønland, Oslo, Norway

www.nbu.no

(7348 members)



Sveriges 4H

Box 2012, 64102, Katrineholm Sweden

www.4h.se

(11368 members)

GROUP IV



Eesti 4H

Allika 2a, 80036, Pärnu, Estonia

www.eesti4h.ee

members)

(1143



Latvian 4H

Ezermalas 28, LV-1014, Riga, Latvia

www.mazpulki.lv

members)

(2500



Latvian Young Farmer's Club (JZK)

Latvijas Jauno Zemnieku klubs, Dobeles iela 41A,
LV-3001, Jelgava, Latvia

www.jzk.lv

members)

(118



Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej
Rok założenia 1928

Polish Rural Youth Union

Nowy Świat 19 lok. 17, 00-029, Warsaw, Poland

www.zmw.pl



Federation of Youth Clubs Armenia (FYCA)

Mashtots Ave. 4, 1/1, Yerevan 0015, Armenia

www.fyca.net

4 STATUTORY MEETINGS

4.1 General Assembly

The 2017 General Assembly was held on 9th September 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia.

In total 14 member organisations were present at the General Assembly, 13 of which had full voting rights. In total 17 voting cards were distributed.

The Annual Report was distributed and delivered by visual presentation together with the Financial Report. Key points to note, over and above the usual business, were as follows:

- Costs for board meetings increased due to the addition of the special interests board member and meetings held in Nordic countries
- At the end of 2016 there was a surplus of €2978.
- The GA approved the preliminary budget for 2018 which consisted of: -
 - o An expectation for funding income to be at the normal level and therefore lower than 2017
 - o A reduced budget for communication and equipment due to the renewal of equipment in 2017
 - o Salary costs to remain the same as 2017.
- Autumn Seminar 2017 is to be hosted by Landjudgend Lower Austria and held in Mold, Lower Austria.
- European Rally 2018 will be hosted by SAYFC and will be held in Kilgraston School in Perthshire, Scotland from 12th – 19th August 2018.
- Autumn Seminar 2018 will be held be hosted by Finnish 4H and held in Solvalla, Finland.
- A proposal was received from Danish 4H to host a Junior Event in 2018. This proposal was seconded, and all voted in favour.
- A proposal was received from NFYFC, England to host the Rally in 2019. This proposal was seconded, and all voted in favour.
- No proposals for Autumn Seminar 2019 were received.
- A proposal was received by ZSPM, Slovenia to host Rally 2020. This proposal was seconded, and all voted in favour.
- Norges Bygdeungdomslag (NBU)'s proposal for full membership was presented and all voted in favour.

- An application from the Federation of Youth Clubs of Armenia (FYCA) was presented for candidate membership. Following discussions a vote took place with 13 voting in favour, 2 against and 2 abstentions. The motion was therefore carried.
- Geoff Thompson delivered a presentation on the future of RYEurope's youth policy work following the decision at the 2016 GA to be more active in this area. Discussions ensued regarding required resources and the viability of a volunteer or staff member fulfilling this role. The board will consider various points raised and make proposals before the 2018 GA on how policy work will continue.
- Paddy Delaney's mandate as Group I Board Rep finished and Linzi Stewart, YFCU, was proposed and seconded and all voted in favour.
- Katlin Merisalu's mandate as Group IV Board Rep finished and Aris Brencis, Latvian 4H, was proposed and seconded and all voted in favour.

For further details see the full minutes of GA 2017 which are available on request from the RYEurope office.

4.2 Board Meetings

The Board of RYEurope implements the decisions and policies agreed at General Assemblies, monitors the financial situation, takes care of the staff, and prepares and evaluates the international activities of the organisation.

Key points from Board meetings in 2017

Aarhus, Denmark 18th – 19th February 2017

- Recap of strategic work which resulted in the decision that strategic thinking needs to be incorporated into meetings and monitored to ensure goals are reached. A regular review process will be set up to support continuous strategic work and reviews will be made at each meeting.
- Future handover meetings will include the following:-
 - o A review of the previous year
 - o The creation of a plan for the year ahead
- It was noted that handover meetings may need to be planned for up to 3 days to allow for an effective handover in addition to a full board meeting. Further, the Action plan is a core document and will be introduced to new board members at the Handover meeting.
- Finances relating to 2016 not yet finalised however they are almost complete
- 2018 Budget forecast – similar to 2017 budget
- Applied for Europe for Citizens funding for 2018-19 to allow RYEurope to do more
- Jenni presented Jenni & Pia's revised job descriptions with a few minor changes
- Changes to the Charter made at the 2016 GA have been accepted and approved. As there was a legal change in the charter registration had to be in Germany. Russ & Sebastian are now the legal representatives of the organisation.

Jurmala, Latvia 12th June 2017

- RYEurope have taken on many new things and have made considerable progress in the last year however board members are feeling the workload is heavy at present and so actions need to be prioritised and there is a need to be realistic with resources.
- Elina will be hired as an office assistant from 1st August 2017 to 31st January 2018.
- Finances for 2016 aren't finalise, but will be done shortly. Renewal of office equipment is included in the budget for 2017 and budgets for board meetings will be increased.
- Sponsorship is not a priority right now but will be kept in mind.
- A list of PR materials was created and Jenni will work with Elina to order as required.
- Geoff is getting more used to the structure of COMEM and getting more out of it. If we want more influence we should look at joining a voting block so Geoff will prepare a workshop at the GA to look at how we should take policy work forward. Geoff needs to prioritise tasks and ask for help from the team as his workload is heavy.
- Strategic Work was undertaken however more time is required. Russ & Sebastian will formulate a draft document and circulate to the board for comment.
- Study Session was a success. Participants were very engaged and happy.
- The training combined with a Grand Prep Meeting was also a success and it was agreed this would happen in 2018 too.
- Preparations for Rally and Anniversary celebrations are going well.
- Katlin will share the Conference programme ASAP.
- Autumn Seminar will build a campaign which be rolled out at the end of November.
- Full membership application received from NBU (Norway) and Candidate membership received from FYCA (Armenia).

Ratneiki, Latvia 7th – 10th August 2017

- The standard of the work by the designer used instead of Julia wasn't satisfactory and so Julia will be used for the last magazine of 2017 although contact issues remain.
- Minor amendments made to the 2018 budget namely reserving additional funds for board meetings
- Farm Start application in conjunction with CEJA was unsuccessful.
- Rural Voices will be produced in Autumn and the future of the magazine will be reviewed
- Anniversary plans were discussed with Julia giving an update on plans to date. An action list was composed to ensure tasks were undertaken.
- Three quotes for the design of the website have been received and there is concern over the cost relating to emails given the number of accounts used by the Board. It was decided the Framill will be used for the website and efforts will be made to negotiate a better price for emails.
- The board will create anniversary content for social media and tag members in posts to create additional traffic
- Geoff will pull together a paper for the GA to explain our policy work to date
- Strategic work is happening although no formal document at present and so this will be prepared for the GA and feedback from the GA sought.
- Plans for the Conference were presented and discussed with a table of actions to be drawn up.
- GA will take place in Tallinn, Estonia on 9th September 2017. Due to time restrictions and activities during the conference there will be no workshops at the GA.

- French Swiss Rural Youth are considering candidate membership
- Updates delivered in relation to upcoming events. Nothing major to note save for the absence of host for Autumn Seminar 2019.

Handover Meeting Prague, Czech Republic 4th – 5th November 2017

- An introduction was given on Strategic work for new board members
- Jenni's contract has been revised and she is now employed on a permanent basis. Pia also has a new permanent full-time contract as Education and Fundraising Manager however she will work 50% during child care leave, which concludes on 4th December 2018. Elina's contract is dependent on Erasmus+ operational grant although some things were raised during her end of probation discussion and will be addressed. Monthly staff skype meetings will be held going forward.
- Rural Voices was discussed and a working group set up to create two proposals; one relating to the magazine and one for online content.
- The website is now published and Framill will begin working on the email system.
- Rally in Latvia went well and participants and local team were happy. It was noted that more effort should be made to understand the theme to ensure events meet funding requirements in future.
- Conference in Estonia was a great success. Katlin is working on the evaluation at present and a questionnaire will be created to gather feedback from MO's.
- Autumn Seminar went well and was very well organised. Participants attended for different reasons and feedback was received in relation to this. As a result the behavioural guidelines will be reviewed and forwarded to all participants before an event in future. Facilitating the campaign was challenging and in future a staff member may be required to attend if specific outcomes are required.
- It is unrealistic for Geoff to attend all policy events alongside his other RYEurope responsibilities and we need to be more realistic about Geoff's availability and our limited resources in future.
- Conclusion from GA was that being present at COMEM was an achievement in itself and at present we don't have resources for lobbying. We should continue to network and evaluate the work of the Special Interests role at the end of Geoff's term.
- Anja Fortuna represented RYEurope at the Rural Youth Parliament in Holland. Information before the event was limited and Anja has emailed ERYYP manifesto for consideration. A relevant project for RYEurope but general feeling is that they needed to fulfil funders requirements. RYEurope will maintain dialogue and see if we can do something similar long-term.
- RYEurope will not send anyone for Autumn COMEM and apologies have been sent.
- Russ & Sebastian presented the balance scorecard as a tool for planning and monitoring strategic objectives.
- 2018 budget was introduced with no significant changes from the 2017 budget.
- Funding applications submitted for EYF structural grant, EYF work plan and Study Session 2018 with a theme of 'Participation'.

Board Meeting Oslo, Norway 9th – 10th December 2017

- Development continued for the Strategic Compass as a tool for realising RYEurope's strategic vision.
- Staff issues were discussed as follows:-
 - o Jenni will be on parental leave from 19th January 2018 for approximately 9 months, although it could be longer.
 - o Pia is working 50% until December 2017 and is prepared to work increased hours in 2018 if required to join board meetings.
 - o The search for an interim Secretary General will begin.
 - o Elina's contract will not be renewed.
- The new website is now live and feedback is welcome. There have been issues with the emails and as they are not yet working a refund for November and December will be given.
- The learning platform will be added to the new website. Due to time restrictions this may be outsourced to RYEurope contacts.
- The Board will look at how to keep the network alive after the Conference – perhaps a forum where ideas and information can be shared.
- Sponsorship working group was set up and will consist of Aris, Geoff and Sebastian.
- Aris will shadow Sebastian in terms of financial responsibilities until the GA.
- Plans for future events are going well however there is still no host confirmed for Autumn Seminar 2019. Options are currently being explored.

The board also met with Norwegian MO's.

In addition, several smaller Skype meetings took place to support the work of staff and board.

For further details see the full minutes of the board meetings, available on request from the RYEurope office.

4.3 Secretariat

The office of Rural Youth Europe continued to be located at Karjalankatu 2A, 00520 Helsinki, Finland.

At the beginning of this period the office had one full-time member of staff being Jenni Heinonen as Interim Secretary General, and one part-time member of staff being Pia Nurmio-Perälä as Education and Fundraising Manager. Elina Mäkelä left the organisation at the end of December 2017.

Julia Hentz was employed to produce layout and design for the Rural Voices magazine and any other design tasks required.

Book keeping services were provided by Minna Ylönen of Finnish 4H Federation

5 FINANCES

5.1 Balance sheet

	31.12.2017	31.12.2016
ASSETS		
FIXED ASSETS		
Machinery and equipment	3186,70	625,77
FIXED ASSETS TOTAL	3186,70	625,77
CURRENT ASSETS		
Receivables		
Short-term debtors in total	28506,02	38105,34
Cash in hand and at banks	102565,13	93976,09
CURRENT ASSETS TOTAL	131071,15	132081,43
ASSETS IN TOTAL	134257,85	132707,20
LIABILITIES		
CAPITAL AND RESERVES		
Shares or other comparable assets	24214,75	24214,75
Retained earnings gain or (loss)	56433,06	53454,23
Profit (loss) for the financial year	-79,52	2978,83
CAPITAL AND RESERVES IN TOTAL	80568,29	80647,81
CREDITORS		
Creditors, short term		
Other creditors	4481,50	2005,28
Accrued liabilities	38613,28	40683,53
Liabilities from vacation wages	9370,58	9370,58
Unemployment insurance fee		
debt	1224,20	0,00
CREDITORS IN TOTAL	53689,56	52059,39
LIABILITIES IN TOTAL	134257,85	132707,20

5.2 Income statement

	ID: 2041413-	
Rural Youth Europe	9	
	31.12.2017	31.12.2016
Actual operation expenses		
Personnel expenses		
Salaries	-73015,84	-55430,32
Employees' Pension Act		
(TyEL)	-14243,16	-9176,19
Other social costs	-20269,88	-1586,15
Daily Allowances	-2670,01	-2287,26
Depreciations	-1131,77	-208,59
Other expenses		
Administrative expenses	-3697,94	-1062,25
Rent and fees	-9215,13	-4252,7
Bank charges	-488,35	-473,65
European Youth Forum fee	-1571	-1615
Book keeping	-2976	-1488
Audit	-1464,25	-1422,41
Meetings	-18476,83	-15657,15
Actual operation expenses total	-149220,16	-94659,67
Profit/accrued expense	-149220,16	-94659,67
Projects		
Project income	77786,26	70002,9
Project expenses	-22519,18	-53801,81
Projects total	55267,08	16201,09
Profit/accrued expense	-93953,08	-78458,58
Actual operation income		
Membership fees	31449,89	31400,00
Interest income	141,77	123,07
Operational grants	62281,90	49914,34
Actual operation income total	93873,56	81437,41
Profit/accrued expense	-79,52	2978,83
Fiscal period surplus (deficit)	-79,52	2978,83

6 EVENTS

6.1 Study Session 2017

The Study Session took place from 14th to 21st May 2017 in Budapest, Hungary. Jointly organised by Rural Youth Europe and the Nordic Youth Associations in cooperation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, the session was entitled 'Voices for Life' and aimed to empower individuals in the youth field to promote dialogue on migration related topics and peaceful co-existence within Europe. The group consisted of 32 participants from 18 countries. Throughout the week participants looked at migration and how they can promote integration through their Non Governmental Organisations in their home countries.

The week began by getting to know each other and opened with a talk from a Professor of Sociology from Corvinus University, Budapest. He explained how major migration patterns haven't changed much over the last few centuries and how political debate is skewed towards emotional arguments even though the data is rarely there to support it. Through non-formal educational methods delegates increased their knowledge of the current refugee crisis in Europe, gained the skills to facilitate dialogue between different groups within society and shared good practices of how to promote understanding and peaceful co-existence.

Participants also experienced a simulation of what refugees go through before they arrive at the European border and entered into discussions surrounding Human Rights; what they are and what countries have agreed on. The group then learnt about the work of the Council of Europe in relation to human rights education and the No Hate Speech movement before reflecting and developing their own projects on how to introduce what they had learnt over the week into their home organisations.

6.2 European Rally 2017

The European Rally "AIR" (Active, Inspired, Rural) empowered and united European rural youth to promote diverse and peaceful European societies. Rally 2017 was hosted by Latvian 4H and rally participants:

- Gained awareness of European diversity and the value of it,
- developed increased understanding of the changes in Europe,
- strengthened their European citizenship, and
- built partnerships for further European cooperation and common rural action.

During the Rally the European Rural Youth Parliament held its first session; the theme of which was "Challenges and opportunities of life in rural areas". Participants entered into discussions and learnt that problems faced remain largely the same as several decades ago with agriculture, health care and young people leaving rural areas being the biggest problems. Participants chose one of the topics and spent some time discussing this in greater detail before suggesting possible solutions.

RYEurope also celebrated its 60th anniversary at Rally 2017. Every participant planted a tree to honour the longstanding work of Rural Youth Europe and a Gala dinner was held on the last evening to celebrate 60 years of RYEurope.

The Rally bell was then handed over to the Scottish Association of Young Farmers ahead of the 2018 Rally in Scotland.

6.3 Conference 2017

For the first time RYEurope held a Conference in Jäneda, Estonia which was attended by 22 representatives from 17 of our Member Organisations. The conference aimed to bring together the leaders from MO's to build upon their leadership skills and share good practices. Throughout the duration of the conference participants shared experiences and skills in an attempt to better tackle the challenges presented by a changing Europe and to continue to meet the needs of rural youth. In these times it is important to see what role our MO's can and should play in developing rural communities ensuring peaceful coexistence for all and workshops allowed leaders from MO's to discuss their structures, visions and identify the similar problems faced by organisations across Europe including lack of funding and urbanisation. The event was extremely successful and feedback was very positive.

6.4 Autumn Seminar 2017

The Autumn Seminar was hosted by Landjugend Austria and took place in Mold, Lower Austria from 8th to 15th October 2017. The Seminar was entitled 'Be a Piece of Peace' and saw 36 young people from 12 countries throughout Europe come together and get involved as youth workers, leaders and rural youth in defending human rights and promoting peace in a time of change across Europe.

The week saw participants engage in teambuilding games before being introduced to human rights and looking closer at human rights at risk in today's society. Through interactive workshops and study sessions the participants gained a valuable insight into everyday life in a conflict zone and enjoyed challenging meetings and discussions with refugees from Afghanistan, Iran and Somalia. Participants then explored methods of peace building and conflict resolution and had the opportunity to visit an exhibition which studied the evolution of human rights law over the last 1000 years in Europe.

Towards the end of the week the participants developed a campaign called "Embrace 2 Erase" which aimed to promote equality and embrace diversity.

6.5 Campaign

The EMBRACE2ERASE campaign highlighted the voice of young people in a rapidly changing Europe. The aim of the campaign was to promote equality and embrace diversity in communities throughout Europe.

EMBRACE2ERASE was developed during the 2017 events of Rural Youth Europe, the themes of which focused on human rights and peacebuilding in rural communities. The participants of our Autumn Seminar designed the structure and format based on the outcomes of our 2017 events. Changing Europe and diversity are the issues they found are affecting people in Europe most.

Rural Youth challenged all young people and youth organisations to take part in EMBRACE2ERASE to build a bright future for everyone in rural Europe, regardless on their ethnic or social backgrounds, religion, sexual orientation or heritage by taking responsibility to build inclusive communities through embracing diversity and equality in a changing Europe. The campaign went live during the first week of December and reached almost 18,500 young people across Europe.

7 EXTERNAL RELATIONS

7.1 Council of Europe

RYEurope maintained good working relations with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

7.1.1 European Youth Foundation

The European Youth Foundation (EYF) of the Council of Europe provided grants for administrative expenses and for the work plan 2017. Activities that were included in the Work plan were the Grand Preparatory Meeting and Training, the Rally, the Conference, the Autumn Seminar and the Campaign. The work plan included two editions of the magazine “Rural Voices” to support the dissemination of the outcomes of the activities.

7.1.2 European Youth Centres

The European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest are residential centres of the Youth Department of Council of Europe. In 2017 RYEurope held the study session entitled “Voices for Life” jointly with Nordic Youth Associations in cooperation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

7.2 European Union

In 2017, RYEurope benefited from the Erasmus+ programme as provided by the European Union, through an operational grant.

7.3 European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA)

CEJA is a partner organisation of RYEurope, mainly dealing with agricultural issues and policies on a European level. They lobby the European Commission on behalf of young farmers in Europe.

Both organisations maintain a friendly link between each other and continue to seek opportunities to work together where possible. Throughout 2017 Russ Carrington maintained regular dialogue with both their outgoing and incoming presidents. Secretary General Jenni Heinonen also visited the CEJA office whilst in Brussels for a training event.

7.4 European Youth Forum (YFJ)

RYEurope is a member of the European Youth Forum (YFJ), which is an organisation uniting 104 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations. YFJ works through its various bodies, commissions and task forces towards the European Union, Council of Europe, United Nations and other policy makers to promote issues affecting young Europeans.

The role of special interest board member, filled by Dr Geoffrey Thompson, is to represent RYEurope at YFJ events and explore possibilities for being more active with policy making, mainly via the European Youth Forum and Structured Dialogue.

Meetings attended included:

Council of Members' Meeting, Brussels, 20-23 April

Work at the event included:

- Election of delegates for the Advisory Council on Youth at the Council of Europe
- Resolutions on conditions of LGBTQI community in Turkey
- Resolution on the arbitrary detention of gay and bisexual people in Chechnya

Workshops on the following topics:

- Increasing volunteering in the youth sector
- Erasmus+ review
- UN 2030 sustainable development agenda

Cycle of the European Youth Forum's Structured Dialogue - Enabling all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe

Round 1 - The Netherlands, 4-8 April

This round aimed to gather current concerns of young people on the topic.

Round 2 - Slovakia, 2-6 October

This round aimed to make 16 recommendations based on the concerns previously identified

Round 3 - Malta, 20-24

This round aimed to develop a tool box that can be implemented at local, national, and European level to address the concerns identified and recommendations produced.

7.5 International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth (MIJARC)

MIJARC is a Catholic Rural Youth Organisation mainly represented in the western, southern and eastern parts of Europe with approximately 100.000 members in 12 member organisations. RYEurope has for many years had an ongoing strong cooperation with MIJARC.

During 2017 vice-chairman Sebastian Lassnig attended their General Assembly.

7.6 European IFYE Alumni Association

International Farm Youth Exchanges (IFYE) arrange exchange programmes on farms for rural young people. The exchanges last for 1-6 months with alternating different rural host families in another country. The programme involves Europe and also the USA, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, South Korea, Taiwan, Costa Rica and several other countries.

Good relations have been maintained with IFYE and approximately 100 participants from our member organisations benefit from the exchange programme every year.

The European IFYE Conference will be held in Ulster in July 2018.

7.7 European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC)

European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC) is a European network of youth work and youth club organisations that practice and promote open youth work and non-formal learning. RYEurope and ECYC have regularly cooperated at Study Sessions.

7.8 Youth Express Network (Y-E-N)

Youth Express Network (Y-E-N) is a European network for non-governmental youth organisations working on inclusion and human rights issues. RYEurope and Y-E-N has regularly cooperated over study sessions.

7.9 European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA)

The European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA) brings together European civil organisations, which are involved in the integrated and multi-sectorial rural development. RYEurope started a partnership with ERCA in 2010.

7.10 Forum Synergies

Forum Synergies is a European non-profit organisation, which aims at gathering, reinforcing and spreading sustainable practices, mainly in rural areas.

7.11 Other Rural Youth Organisations

RYEurope has established preliminary contact with rural youth associations in South Tyrol (Italy) and Armenia regarding possible cooperation or membership.

8 RURAL YOUTH PROJECT OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

The Rural Project of the Year is something more than a competition. It is a platform to showcase the good work done by member organisations to the rest of the world (or at least to as many people as we can reach). Whether entries demonstrate maintaining cultural heritage, bringing forgotten skills to light, or extending a helpful hand to ones in need, the competition provides recognition for good work and inspires others to follow the suit.

The board of Rural Youth Europe was really impressed with the creativity and commitment towards local communities demonstrated by our member organisations during 2017. Therefore, we would like to thank all the organisations that entered the competition – all the people involved have done a great job and should feel proud of themselves!

During the public voting the projects reached 42 000 unique users on Facebook and in total more than 1800 votes were cast. It should be noted that both the reach and the total number of votes was higher last year; however, this is largely to do with the changes in Facebook's algorithms.

9 MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

9.1 Rural Voices magazine

Two editions of the Rural Youth Europe magazine named "Rural Voices" were published in 2017. The magazine has an interactive approach as it contains many short articles and news from the member organisations. Rural Voices contains also reports on RYEurope activities, the international and national activities of Member Organisations and topics of general interest: young people living in the countryside, European youth policy, information on funding possibilities, general European issues, etc.

9.2 Website

In 2017 Rural Youth Europe renewed its website and email system. The old website had some technical problems so the board decided to create a new one with a fresher layout and mobile device friendly structure. The project was carried out by Framill Oy from Finland.

9.3 E-Newsletter

The E-newsletter of RYEurope was published and sent out monthly and remains an important communication tool to update members and partners with the latest news. The newsletter provides up-to-date information about different training and activities of RYEurope, member organisations, partner organisations and other organisations working in the youth field.

There are 800 recipients on the mailing list.

9.4 Blog

The blog aims to give young people in rural parts of Europe an opportunity to share their stories and experiences. Around one post per month was published. The posts were about international experiences or success stories from young entrepreneurs. Authors of blog posts were volunteers. The most popular blog posts had over 1,000 readers.

9.5 Social Media

Rural Youth Europe has been visible on several social media platforms. Most activity has taken place on Facebook, but Twitter as well as Instagram were also used. During 2017 Rural Youth Europe used the hashtags #weareruralyouth and #eyfcoe in addition to #ruralyoutheurope. Facebook has been the main platform for sharing information, while Instagram has been used more to share moments from the events. Twitter is used more amongst the Group 1 member organisations.

10 STRATEGIC WORK

Throughout 2017 the board and staff have worked to further develop a strategic work model and a strategy document for RYEurope. The work has been done at various board meetings with the aim of having strategic thinking and goals embedded in the actions, thinking and daily work of RYEurope.

Rural Youth Europe is supported by:



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