SG-REP Sec-Gen Report

Organization: CDN
Resolution date: 18.03.2025
Agenda item: 4. Reports and plans

Motion text

Report covers the period from May 2024 to March 2025.

Background

The Secretariat report was presented at GAs twice, in 2019 and 2022, to reflect on Secretariat working conditions and practices and propose recommendations for improvement.

Since this year, as the Secretary-General is elected by GA, such a report will be presented by the Sec-Gen to reflect on the SG's and, in wider context, office work in the previous year. The report does not cover the activities implemented both physically and online, as they are in the scope of the activity plan.

Employment Conditions & Infrastructure

Working conditions are decent, with much improvement during the previous three years. The salaries in the Office were significantly increased at the beginning of 2024, amounting to EUR 1,300 for Sec-Gen, and EUR 1,200 for other employees. In February 2025, the salary of other employees was increased by EUR 50 to compensate for the increase in taxes in Serbia (this does not apply to Sec-Gen, which settles taxes in Poland). This is about the average official gross salary in Serbia (1268 EUR). The Office has been the same since the beginning of 2023, giving enough space for the personnel and not shared with any other entity.

A major step forward in improving the conditions for the Office was the creation and adaptation of the Office Guidelines, defining the conditions of work in the Office. Previously, all the conditions were scattered in various documents, such as contracts, separate documents, and EC Meetings minutes, as well as resulting from an unwritten agreement, now they are in one document. We have introduced a clear policy of paying for overtime (up to 70 hours a year), previously it was decided to pay (or not) overtime payments ad hoc at the end of every year.

Office personnel in 2024 were a bit overworked, with reflects in overhours paid. This was largely due to the calendar (Summer Camp in August and the start of subsequent activities at the end of August made it impossible to take holidays for most of the summer) and unexpected events (new GF application, new residency law in Serbia that prolonged the Sec-Gen residency process). We decided to prolong the transfer period in the Office and think about opening the internship. However, implementation of any bigger additional activity would require employing additional persons, thus administrative fundraising.

Internal training

We did not manage to organise internal training, especially in social media skills, and in some specific policy areas. This resulted from overspending on some other activities and a lack of capacities in the office to organize additional training and implement its results. We took part in more external training, especially by the European Youth Foundation and Council of Europe. This helped a lot in gaining skills in some key elements (e.g. trauma-informed youth work), however, was not as specific and tailored to our needs as internal training would be. For example, theoretical knowledge and an open course on social media would not improve our communication, while the tailored workshop would do, external training on the legal administration of INGO would also not be helpful for our specific legal organisation, but a workshop with lawyer with experience on INGOs as ours would be.

Strategy Monitoring

We have met our strategic objectives in 73% (I goal: 80%, II goal: 76%, III goal: 63%). The raw numbers don't say much though, as this is the first year of strategy monitoring by CDN - KPIs set and targets indicated need to be revisited in the next EC mandate, before mid-term strategy assesment. From specific objectives, we succeded especially in enhancing capacities in our events, further professionalisation of the network. We need to work especially on: (1) small-scale fundraising, (2) digital activities and campaigns, (3) number of opinion pieces by EC, and (4) number of inputs from MOs to newsletter gathered.

Contact with EC

The office is in constant contact with EC. Delegation Order has made it easier to work, as most tasks and small decisions are taken very quickly, and only strategic decisions that require serious discussion are left for EC meetings. This makes it easier to plan work significantly. However, when an EC member is not active, it requires additional work by the entire EC or even the Office is sometimes forced to make strategic decisions that should not be our role. Last year it significantly hindered some activities, especially fundraising and strategy monitoring.

The Executive Committee's Office Responsible role is not very well defined but should be taken more seriously. Office Responsible should be regularly in touch with the Office, not only at the moment when some conflicts occur and intervention is required (none during this year) but at least periodically checking the progress of work, the condition of work and the workload in the Office.

Fundraising

Structural fundraising remains the priority. During the year we submitted two applications for new grants. The ideas for them can be used in the additional applications, we also developed partnership programme ideas that we are going to

apply for in the next year. Due to decreasing support for NGOs in Europe and around the world, some programmes we planned to (re)apply for (eg. NED) were closed.

We need more training and experience in small-scale fundraising, as we received only 50 EUR in donations.

Due to changes in the Swedish government, our previous agreement with Green Forum ForumCIV (originally for 2023-25) was terminated. We needed to apply for another programme of Green Forum. The process went smoothly, with great help from Green Forum. We submitted the application and received additional funding from GF. However, it took about ~80 working hours for Sec-Gen and ~20 other workers to finalise the application, thus taking a lot from Office capacities in other directions (eg. Webinars, further fundraising).

Among the savings sought on current activities, it was possible to save on Executive Committee Meetings, organizing one less than planned. Thanks to the adoption of the Delegation Order, this did not negatively affect the work of the Office.

Relations with other organisations

Our relations with FYEG have definitely improved, which makes our work easier. We are in constant communication and share our plans. We have tried to be active at events of other Green organizations, participating in EGP and GEF congresses and contacting many organizations. We need to work on increasing our visibility and influence, both for political purposes (e.g. thinking about submitting a resolution together with FYEG), as well as to help our MOs. Conflict with the mother party occurs often in our regions and EGP should take this more seriously. Most notably, Polish Young Greens almost ceased to exist during the last two years due to the attacks and illegal stop of funding by the Polish Green Party's board on the youth wing – unfortunately, a member of the Polish Green Party's board was elected to EGP Committee. In such situations, we should be more visible to better amplify the voices of our MOs.

We have been more active in the EYF, establishing contacts with many organizations thanks to this. We have also established contact with the European Youth Forum. However, we do not yet meet the minimum requirements for membership in the IFJ (minimum 3000 members, minimum 100 in 6 countries).

Next steps and recommendations

The priority for improving the work of the office in the next year will be (1) further fundraising and (2) refining the internal documents. Fundraising is necessary for the further growth of the network, and even small-scale fundraising will be crucial for co-funding of activities, thus better planning and increasing the impact of the activities (eg. by funding additional local action). On internal documents, the political platform should help in communication, we also will work on creating new IRPs, as the current one is outdated and chaotic.

Regarding IRP changes, for the whole network, rethinking the format of General Assembly and reducing the costs of it would be suggested. As GA spending is growing due to increasing the number of MOs and is not a project, it is harder to get funding for it. It is now over 20% of administrative spending and in the year Strategic Planning Meeting (3-day GA) would be even bigger. At the same time, since GA does not GA is not a place for many political discussions on motions and resolutions, its format should be rethought and slightly changed to bring more added value to the network and participants. The value of the networking part of GA can be realized in (cross)regional meetings, and part of GA spending could be allocated to capacity-building activities or internship programs. Another suggestion is to strengthen the role of EC. Especially in terms of representing the organisation externally, or in social media, EC should have clearer responsibilities, either for all of EC, or in the form of two (informal) co-spokespeople, or specific co-spokespeople policy. There should be also a clearer procedure for dealing with when someone from EC does not fulfil their responsibilities. In addition, the Executive Committee's Office Responsible role should be taken more seriously.