SG-REP Secretary General Report 2025-26

Organization: CDN
Resolution date: 13.03.2026
Agenda item: 4. Reports and plans

Resolution text

The report covers the period from April 2025 to March 2026, i.e. the second year of the Sec-Gen's term.

Employment Conditions and Infrastructure

The working conditions remain decent. The salaries in the Office went up 50 EUR in November 2025, amounting to EUR 1,350 for Sec-Gen (EUR 1,400 for next term) and 1.300 for other full-time positions. The increase was planned (in the financial plan) since January 2026, but savings were allowed to be implemented earlier. The increase is due to the inflation and tax raises in Serbia, still being around the average gross salary in Serbia (1,308 EUR in December 2025). Additional raises or employing a new person would require receiving an additional grant.

In addition, the EC decided to grant an office year-end reward of 450 EUR per person. The EC decision states: In years where there is a profit compared to the financial plan, the Office may be awarded a year-end reward of up to 20% of the additional profit to be divided among personnel, which makes the reward clearly defined and predictable.

The only significant change in the infrastructure is that, due to the savings in 2025 and the transfer periods incoming, we bought new computers for the office.

The adopted Office Guidelines show the total amount of overtime, which stayed at the same level (around 120 in total for all Office personnel) despite the two additional projects organised.

Internship programme

The Project&Communication Intern started working in September and works until the GA is finished. The internship is remote, with participation in the Study Session and EC Meetings, totalling 17.5 hours per week, with a salary of 550 EUR. The main tasks and learning outcomes were defined in the activity report. The intern was supervised by the Secretary-General.

The internship brought improvement in the quality of the communication, especially from the events, and the coherence. Thus, it was proven that it is a good idea to have another position responsible for comms, even if part-time, or just for a specific campaign period. Project-wise, Sintija contributed to the FemAT Local Action as well as took some responsibilities from the Office in reporting (though it was limited due to some funders changing deadlines). Generally, the programme and intern's work has a big advantage for CDN.

As it was the first CDN internship in years, the planning was quite chaotic. The internship plan was proven to be insufficient and needed to be adjusted during the internship (also due to the changes in deadlines of some

applications/reports compared to the last year). This negatively affected the learning process, but hopefully will not affect satisfaction with the internship. It is recommended for the future to organise the internship programmes, not necessarily every year, but depending on the needs and capacities, to provide a good plan with learning outcomes.

It would be good to monitor somehow the situation of former interns, to check if the knowledge gained during the internship benefits CDN or its MOs. It would be fantastic if every intern applied for other positions, or EC, or Prep-Teams in the coming years, but there are many circumstances that make it unpredictable. The introduction of an alumni network might help in that as well.

Office Retreat and Internal Training

Office retreat was organised to create the transfer documents and team-build before the in-live activities in 2025, with that realising it aims. The documents were created, and the transfer will be much more straightforward.

We did not organise any internal training for Office, unfortunately. The Office retreat was prioritised, as well as additional activities in Q2-Q4. Finally, Office personnel also did not attend any in-person external training (one was supposed to go, but withdraw due to the sickness) due to the combination of lack of time and over-experience for some offered workshops.

New Office members will be encouraged to attend some external training, especially for the first year. Some two-days internal training plus team-building outside of Belgrade was proven to be a good practice as well, maybe with the use of some online tools, and invitation of some external expert at the later stage if needed.

Strategy Monitoring

We have met our strategic objectives in 92,11% (I goal: 100%, II goal: 94,31%, III goal: 82%), which is increase of 11 p.p. comparing to 2024 (KPI monitoring sheet available on request). We are succeeding in the educational events, and improved compared to 2025 in transforming them into outputs (increased number of publications). The goal 3: Bringing Eastern European perspective remains weaker and harder to measure: we increased the traffic on website or social media engagement, but it might be derivative of increased engagement in educational activities etc.

At ECM2, steps were taken to improve the strategy itself and its monitoring. KPIs were modified to measure the outreach and engagement of our external communication, instead of just its individual forms (which, like Opinion Pieces introduced last year, proved uninteresting and unengaging). At the same time, an amendment to the strategy was proposed, defining the forms of communication and their message, to avoid engagement farming (which in political movements is usually negative and reactive messaging) simply to achieve KPIs. CDN is committed to achieving engagement, but in a manner consistent with our engagement ladder.

Contact with EC

The contact between Office and EC improved comparing to the last year. The daily decision-making is quick on regular bi-weekly meetings, while the strategic decision are focus of the live meetings.

The activity and responsiveness of all EC Members increased the productivity of the network as a whole, also decreasing the amount of work put on the office. In previous term (2024/25), the reshuffling of work, waiting for the input of two inactive EC Members and forcing Office to make strategic decisions not in this role meant a lot wasted time for Sec-Gen, as well as other, active EC Member. In the 2025/26 term, this was freed up. Thus, the organisation of two additional events (Environmental Consequences of War and Training for Trainers) was possible thanks to EC being active and taking their work seriously.

While the EC task division was equal at the beginning, some people took additional projects not defined at the beginning, that could lead to inequal task division and overwork. There was reshuffling of tasks during live EC Meetings to mitigate this risk, but maybe the check-in mechanism from the Office should be implemented to monitor.

Fundraising

Due to the increase of Green Forum funding, we could fit the sensitive gaps in our previous years‘ budgets such as co-funding for work plan and salaries, and rather apply for grants based on our strategic priorities rather than to adjust our priorities to the grant. This also meant that we did not have to look for the additional co-funding of work plan, that previously required a lot of additional work from the office that was freed-up this year.

We applied for additional grant (rejected), as well as created the concept of additional programme Taste the Change: Youth Shaping Sustainable Food Transitions in Municipalities that was not send due to posponing the call for projects and can be used next year with some funder.

We need more work put in the small scale fundraising. We received only 20 EUR in small-scale donations. We also need to pay attention in the changes in the donor lanscape. The cuts in USAID did not concern us directly, as we have not applied for any such grant; however, it means that some organisations previously funded by USAID were applying for other grants. This means bigger competition for the usual grants we were receiving or applying for. Due to that, we need to put more focus on the applications for this funder; however, it is difficult because of a lack of any feedback on applications from their side (they either accept or do not). We will definitely need to pay more attention to CoE Youth Sector priorities while planning activities.

Relations with Other Organisations

We continued good, and on-time communication with FYEG, sharing calendars and doing some statement co-operation. We participated in the meeting with Foundation Max van der Stoel (PvdA foundation, Netherlands) to get to know each other and put stones towards potential cooperationa after GL-PvdA merger. We were also again represented at EGP Congress, with no significant updates.

We stay in contact with other youth international NGOs, either via EYF events, or participation in some events. This needs to be continued, but in order to increase our position, we need to make steps towards joining European Youth

Forum. For this we need to increase the membership base, especially in our most active MOs – thus, maybe they should be strategically prioritised over next 1-2 years.

Next steps and recommendations for next Sec-Gen

Finishing my mandate, I believe the plans and strategy for next year are well-defined. A crucial thing will be to ensure the sustainable transfer of positions and continuation of work, merging the current strategy with the vision of the new Secretary-General. My recommendations for the next Sec-Gen, Office and EC that were not put into other documents include:

- The financial management and budget planning should be sustainable and reflect the challenges in the donor landscape. Thus, the amount of savings should not decrease much, and preferably increase, over the next few years in the case we do not need to implement any crisis management connected to the termination of some grant. Small-scale fundraising might be prioritised, as there is no need to gradually increase the activities of CDN, but ensure they are sustainable.

- Division of tasks in the office could be more equal on the institutional/document level. In my two years, we have quite an unequal division at some points, which was not problematic due to the overall good relations within the office, but can potentially cause problems in the future. Reflecting on specific tasks should be done periodically, especially to reduce the workload of the Finance and Office Manager in the coming years.

- Communication priority should indeed bring the Eastern European perspective regarding the developments in EE politics and our progressive postulates for the change. We are sometimes the only ones or one of the few pages that can gather the info about the region – the info from political parties or other organisations is limited due to their electoral aim, and the most popular info about the region often comes from Western influencers. Thus, I suggest increasing the communication on the developments in Eastern European countries, with the focus on positive developments or counter- and alternative narratives, with informative posts spreading the information. Furthermore, the fact that we are not competing in the elections and our ladder of engagement leads through MOs makes us less dependent on the outreach. Furthermore, this allows us to experiment with some avant-garde forms, having much more freedom in communications.

- Regarding the EC work, the task division can be clearer and more in line with the strategic decisions of EC. Eg, the decision on enhanced internal communication and trying out the new format (short videos) should include a list of topics and the person responsible for recording the videos. Maybe the role of (unofficial) spokesperson(s) should be discussed.

Moreover, repeating the point from last year, I strongly suggest rethinking the role and format of the General Assembly. The GA's added value is low compared to the capacity-building events considering the amount of money and office capacity it takes, and, however necessary, can be shortened or be smaller, or even

organised online, sometimes, eg, every second year. With new IRPs that shorten bureaucracy and implement changes increasing the roles of MOs in-between GAs, and a new form of political conference that has already tried this year, we might increase the added value of GA, so the next year I will be proven wrong.

Hence, I leave the the position CDN on a stable organisational basis, clear strategic direction and strong human potential. The organisation has proven its resilience, adaptability and relevance in a rapidly changing regional context, and this is an asset to be further strengthened. Our strength is in trust-based cooperation, flexibility and critically implemented Green and progressive values. We can work beyond the standard NGO practices, innovate faster than the systems we operate with, make some avant-garde, experimental forms of communication, organisational or event formats, or decision-making, as long as they remain transparent, accountable and politically meaningful.

I will stay (remotely) at CDN at least for three more months as coordinator of Taste the Change programme.