

**Newsletter #1 2013  
European YWCAs Committee**

***Summer Greetings***

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**A Message from the European YWCAs Committee**

Dear YWCA Members,

What an incredible eight months since our European Regional Meeting (ERM) in November of last year 2012. Firstly, let us extend our gratitude for electing Anna Magnusson for a second term as President of the European YWCAs Committee.

The most inspiring element of the ERM is the fact that we elected all young women onto the Committee. This was a great moment for European YWCAs. The ERM was a rich and vibrant meeting hosted by the YWCA of Czech Republic in Celakovice, at which we successfully adopted a Strategic Plan and Work Plan for 2013-2014, focusing on strengthening partnerships and national movements, promoting the rights of women, young women and girls, increasing young women's participation in decision making structures of European bodies, opportunities for mutual learning and exchanges in priority areas, fund-raising and resources. We now have four priority areas for the European YWCAs:

1. Violence against women and girls
2. Trafficking and migration of women and girls
3. Young women's leadership
4. Education.

These priority areas reflect the challenges and in some cases tragic circumstances faced by women and girls across Europe. Within our European YWCAs movement spanning 27 countries our associations provide a safe space for women and girls to come together engage in development programmes around personal growth and leadership, economic independence and education. Furthermore, YWCAs provide much needed services within communities from women's shelters, kindergartens and childcare, counselling, referral and emergency crisis. Campaigns to prevent trafficking have been championed by YWCAs in Finland, Belarus and Albania, national and local YWCAs around the world are committed to seeing an end to violence against women. The diversity of our movement is reflected through the work of the YWCAs and the various individuals who are members or seek YWCA services. From migrants, homeless families, women living with HIV, women and children who have experienced violence, people living with disabilities and people who are drug or substance dependent, all are welcome through the doors of the YWCA.

Over the course of the last eight months we have engaged in various activities and continued to raise the visibility of the European YWCAs. As a movement we have engaged in various platforms and events such as the European Women's Lobby, the Council of Europe, the World YWCA International Leadership Institute, the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the European Youth Forum. The European YWCAs also held the European Study Session - European Young Women Advocating for Human Rights and Equality. As you read through this newsletter, you will have a greater understanding of the remarkable work being achieved through the fantastic opportunities and diligent commitment of the European YWCAs Committee.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest appreciation to our members and hope that our collective efforts can create a more inclusive and safer world for women and girls.

### **Last committee meeting Feb 2013**

The European YWCAs Committee held their first meeting early in February of this year 2013. The newly elected committee made up of 80% young women: Nora Bandixen from the YWCA-YMCA of Switzerland, Gitte Berle from the YWCA-YMCA of Denmark (Treasurer), Nina Meiling from the YWCA of the Netherlands, re-elected Irina Rodygina from the YWCA of Ukraine and President of the European YWCAs Committee, Anna Magnusson from the YWCA-YMCA of Sweden, came together to plan the implementation of the European YWCAs Strategic Plan 2013-2016, identify key advocacy events, trainings and opportunities for engagement across Europe.

The meeting was held over three days at the World YWCA office, in Geneva, Switzerland with support from Michelle Higelin, the World YWCA focal point for Europe and Marcia Banasko, World YWCA European YWCAs Administrator.

Following the success of European Representatives Meeting in November, 2012, the European Committee revisited the adopted a Strategic Plan and Work plan for 2013-2014, focusing on strengthening partnerships and national movements, promoting the rights of women, young women and girls, increasing young women's participation in decision making structures of European bodies, opportunities for mutual learning and exchanges in priority areas, fund-raising, and resources.

The Committee reflected on the Work plan 2013-2014 and extensively deliberated on the roles and responsibilities of the Committee and YWCA Member Associations, in regards to how to continue to build the organisational sustainability of the movement for the delivery of the Strategic Plan and securing the future.

The Financial Report was delivered by European YWCAs Committee Treasurer Gitte Berle. During the meeting it was highlighted that greater financial transparency is needed both internally and externally in the future.

Key Actions to be taken in 2013:

- Build strong partnerships and national movements - Engage members in campaigns and activities of partner organizations on priority issues.
- Grow the resources of YWCAs in Europe through promotion of joint-fundraising and resource mobilization efforts.



The European YWCAs

- Participate in annual meetings of European Youth Forum, European Youth Lobby and Conference of European Churches.
- Identify opportunities for young women to engage in European policy discussions.
- Provide opportunities for mutual learning and exchange among member associations in Europe on priority issues.
- Seek resources through EU Youth in Action programme to facilitate exchanges and partnerships among YWCAs in Europe.
- Coordinate an annual study session with the Council of Europe for young women in YWCAs
- Develop and implement young women's leadership development strategy
- Develop and implement a Young Women's Leadership and Development Strategy to include key priorities from the Young women Summit including regular updates from Member Associations on the progress of Young Women Leadership and Empowerment to the European YWCA.

## Update- Engagement with Partners

### Council of European Churches (CEC)

*By Nora Bandixen, European YWCAs Committee Member*

This year's theme to the 14<sup>th</sup> Council of European Churches (CEC) Assembly is *CEC and its mission to change Europe*. The assembly will take place in Budapest, Hungary from the 3-8<sup>th</sup> of July, 2013. Pirjo-Liisa Penttinen of the YWCA Finland will be representing the European YWCAs in the assembly, accompanied by Nora Bandixen. Many changes to the CEC Constitution will be discussed at the assembly as the council is going through a restructuring process. The European YWCAs together with the other NGOs and youth organisations are advocating for the continued inclusion of NGOs to remain part of this ecumenical body, to be able to take part in the decision-making and give young women a voice in CEC!

Click here to read more about CEC on their website <http://www.ceceurope.org/>

### European Women's Lobby EWL

*By Gitte Berle, European YWCAs Committee Treasurer*

The European Women's Lobby held its General Assembly at the end of May 2013 at which Gitte Berle represented the European YWCAs. EWL are developing strategies to enable effective alliances, networks and outreaches. During the GA, various discussions took place regarding EU-level policies relating to equality between women and men; how to combat male violence against women, empower women in decision-making and improve the economic and social independence of women.

The GA presented a great opportunity for continued partnerships and networking among women's rights organisation. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, 2013 the European Women's Lobby was awarded the European Citizen's Prize. Launched by the Parliament in 2008 to recognise exceptional achievements by Europeans, this year the EWL is one of year 43 organisations selected for the prize in honour of their good work contributing to and promoting better mutual understanding and closer integration between citizens or facilitating cross-border or transnational cooperation within the EU.

## European Youth Forum (YFJ)

By Nina Meiling, European YWCAs Committee Member

### *Reflections on the GENERAL ASSEMBLY (GA) – November 2012*

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) is an umbrella organisation that represents around 100 European youth organisations as one voice for youth across various political, economic and social spheres including the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Every two years the General Assembly of the European Youth Forum is held. The most recent GA took place in Maribor, Slovenia from the 21st until the 25th of November 2012. I went there as delegate to represent the European YWCAs.

During the GA a new board was appointed, the agenda, progress report, work plan, and budgets were adopted, and candidate members to the Youth Forum were accepted as full members. During lunch, dinner, coffee and drinks relationships were built and connections were created or reaffirmed.

The YFJ consists of two pillars: the National Youth Councils (NYC) and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (ENGYOs) that are almost equally represented in the YFJ. The YWCA is an International Non-Governmental Youth Organisation (INGYO) within the EYF.

The YWCA is part of the faith based organisations group, a sort of feedback group that helps each other and discusses common interests. I have had lunches with this group and discussion who would be good candidates to vote on for the board of the YFJ. The faith based organisations consist of: WAGGGS (world association of girl guides and girl scouts), the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), WOSM (World Organisation of the Scout Movement), MIJARC (rural youth movement), EUJS (European Union of Jewish Students) and others.



I joined a discussion group about the policy paper “ensuring gender equality in the youth forum: exchange of ideas and good practices” where Llaría Esposito, WAGGGS member and also advisor on Gender within the Advisory Council of the Council of Europe was also present and showed a lot of insights about gender balance.

My goal for all the meetings within the YFJ is to reconnect with similar organisations like WAGGGS (organize events together), strengthen the relationship with the faith based organisations, make the YWCA a strong voice within the YFJ by participating in all the meetings and nominating a member for the next board of the YFJ and/or the advisory council of the Council of Europe. This will enable us to have direct impact on policies, especially concerning gender, leadership, and violence against women.

Click here to read the entire blog: <http://ywca.ninameiling.nl/#post1>

### *COUNCIL OF MEMBERS (COMEM) – April 2013*

In the weekend of April 20 I went to the Council of Members meeting of the European Youth Forum in Brussels as a representative of the European YWCAs. The ‘big thing’ happening during this meeting with the more than 100 Youth Organisations of Europe was the election

of 20 youth representatives for the Advisory Council of the Council of Europe.

Next to the fact that it was wonderful to see everybody again that I met in November 2012, it was also a good opportunity to create new relationships, hear about all the opportunities for the YWCA within the Youth Forum, and to strengthen the knowledge of existence of the YWCA. (What? The YMCA? No, that's another organization. I am from the young WOMEN Christian Organisation).

Click here to read the entire blog on COMEM: <http://ywca.ninameiling.nl/#post1>

## European YWCAs- Young Women

### Young Women's Strategy

*By Nora Bandixen, European YWCAs Committee Member*

Since the beginning of this year 2013, a task group of seven young women from five different European countries have been following up on the decision made during the ERM to draft a Young Women's Strategy. Ela Iliesi from the YWCA of Romania, Jolien Roetman, from the YWCA of Netherlands, Adeline Dinsmore from YWCA of Great Britain, Seraina Hauser, from YWCA/YMCA Switzerland, Zhenni Matshkalyan from YWCA of Armenia, Marcia Banasko Administrative Support Officer for the European YWCAs staff and Nora Bandixen from the European YWCAs Committee worked on the strategy through numerous Skype conferences.

The basis for the Strategy was developed during the ERM, 2012, whereby a one day Young Women's Summit was held. Twenty-five young women from 14 member associations met to discuss future goals, challenges and a way forward for young women in the European YWCA movement. The meeting allowed a dialogue and sharing of diverse opinions, knowledge and experiences. As a result the young women produced an outcomes document which was



later accepted as a recommendation during the ERM resulting in a taskforce being established to undertake the role of addressing the issues raised and implementing the actions needed.

The strategy was finalised in June and is now available online :

(<https://www.facebook.com/notes/european-ywcas-young-women/european-ywcas-young-womens-strategy/465876696840584>) to all national YWCAs. It contains issues deemed important to young women across Europe. These issues were identified by the young women in the ERM and the taskforce, as well as by the young women who took part in the study session in May, 2013. The strategy contains specific key actions to address these issues. It also outlines recommendations to the European YWCAs committee and the national YWCAs, and thus how they can support young women in achieving the set goals. One of the actions outlined in the young women's strategy is the development of a European YWCAs website.

Through this young women's strategy we hope to inspire and motivate young women from all over Europe to work towards our shared goals and values together!

## Study Session

By Marcia Banasko and Nina Meiling

In the second week of May 2013, 35 participants from 21 countries gathered in Strasbourg, France to join the European YWCAs Study Session. The Study Session was organised in cooperation with the Council of Europe and took place in the European Youth Centre. The preparation team that developed the programme Irina Rodygina, Noemi Helfenstein, YWCA-YMCA of Switzerland, Marcia Banasko (course director), Nina Meiling, and Juli Dugdale World YWCA Global Programme Manager for Young Women's Leadership and Tatevi Margaryan, Council of Europe Educational Advisor.

The theme of the Study Session was - *European Young Women Advocating for Human Rights and Equality*. The programme had clear objectives to focus on gender equality with an in depth analysis of gender itself, understanding women's human rights, designing advocacy campaigns, and implementing a human rights based approach through campaigns, workshops or project proposals.

The programme was very comprehensive and intensive (but glittered with fun also). Highlights included in-depth discussions and analysis on socio-cultural foundations of gender based violence and discrimination, human rights, meeting at the Council of Europe the Palais de l'Europe (Palace of Europe) with the division for gender equality and women, campaigns and advocacy development, social media, networking and fundraising sessions, a flash mob in the city centre of Strasbourg to raise awareness of gender based violence, project design and lots more! One of the greatest tools for the group to remain engaged is the E-Learning Platform which is an online tool to share resources, publications, presentations, photos and send messages and have forum conversations. It's a fantastic tool and we have it for as long as it exists, we can also add people to the group.



Overall, based on the reflections from the preparation team and also the evaluations from the participants, the study session was a great success with many learning's and also friendships and networks created. Some of the participants have realistic and strong ideas for projects/campaigns for the future for example the Head of the European Youth Foundation (EYF), Jean-Claude Lazaro gave a presentation on grants available from the EYF and expressed his professional opinion that particular projects illustrated by the group would definitely get funding if they applied. They have grants on local, national, regional and international levels.

To read blogs of participants click here <http://womenleadingchange.wordpress.com/?s=study+session+2013> . Also, you can like the Facebook page of the World YWCA <https://www.facebook.com/pages/World-YWCA/152768022010?fref=ts> and the Facebook page of the European Young Women <https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanYwcaYoungWomensSummit?fref=ts> , where you can read more about the Study Session and check out the photos but also keep being updated on all activities and events of the European YWCAs Young Women.

## Take Action

### *European Youth Forum*

EYF is calling for applications from member organisations to take part in training on policy development, taking place from the 15th-19th of September 2013. EYF aims to promote the financial recognition and the capacity building of youth organisations at European and global levels, with young people co-managing the programmes and policies affecting their lives. In line with this objective, the Forum organises training on policy development: how to contribute from youth work perspective for representatives coming from NYCs and INGYOs.

The European YWCAs can nominate multiple members between the ages of 18-35 years old to participate in the training. All costs will be covered. Application deadline is the 14th of July. If you are interested please contact the European YWCAs Committee directly via [nora.bandixen@gmx.ch](mailto:nora.bandixen@gmx.ch)

Click here to read more information <http://database.youthforum.org/public/event-details/event/415>

### *YMCA Europe Festival 2013*

The Love 2 Live Festival will provide a unique opportunity for 10,000 young people from across Europe and the world to come together to celebrate life, culture, diversity and all that is inspiring about being young in Europe and the wider world. The festival takes place in Prague, Czech Republic, from the 4<sup>th</sup> till the 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2013. During the course of a week, the Festival will take young people on a journey: exploring their dreams, aspirations & talents; developing their leadership skills; and challenging them to make sense of the world we live in locally, nationally and globally.

Click here to register and find out more <http://www.yefestival.com/>

### *European Youth Foundation*

The European Youth Foundation (EYF) is a fund established in 1972 by the Council of Europe to provide financial support for European youth activities. Its purpose is to encourage co-operation among young people in Europe by providing financial support to such European youth activities which serve the promotion of peace, understanding and co-operation in a spirit of respect for the Council of Europe's fundamental values such as human rights, democracy, tolerance and solidarity.

Click here to for more information <http://www.coe.int/web/european-youth-foundation>

### *No Hate Speech Movement*

Young People Combating Hate Speech Online is a project being run by the Council of Europe's youth sector between 2012 and 2014. It aims to combat racism and discrimination, as expressed online as hate speech, by mobilizing young people and youth organisations to recognise and act against such human rights violations.

Click here to join the campaign [http://act4hre.coe.int/no\\_hate](http://act4hre.coe.int/no_hate)



## Contact Us

If you have any comments, suggestions or ideas please contact us. These are the e-mail addresses of European Committee members:

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