



The European YWCAs

**Newsletter #3 2014
European YWCAs Committee**

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Dear YWCA Members,

Warm Greetings!

As the days grow longer and warmer, we are glad to share the first Newsletter of 2014 to update you on all that has been happening in the European YWCAs.

Wishing you all a beautiful start into the sunny season!

Nina, Anna, Irina, Gitte and Nora.

The European YWCAs Committee



The European YWCAs

Last committee meeting March 2014

By Gitte Berle and Nora Bandixen

The European YWCAs Committee held their third meeting at the beginning of March 2014. The committee came together to review progress made so far in the implementation of the European YWCAs Strategic Plan 2013-2016, and diving deeply into the preparations of the upcoming European Representatives Meeting (ERM).

The meeting was held over four days in Brussels and Antwerp, Belgium, with support from Marcia Banasko, World YWCA European YWCAs Administrator and European Focal Point. At this Point the Committee would also like to express a special **Thank You** to the YWCA of Antwerp! They offered the warmest welcome we could have possibly wished for, and then some! The Committee also wants to thank the European Youth Forum – they were very generous providing us with working-rooms, coffee and other support.

There were two main focuses of the meeting: The first one being the preparations for the ERM, so that it will become an event supporting the European YWCA movement and member associations providing institutional strengthening and fostering of partnerships. The second focus was to visit the European Youth Forum, the European Women's Lobby, WAGGGS as well as the YWCA of Antwerp, to discuss ways of 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, pinpoint opportunities for mutual learning and exchanges in priority areas, fund-raising, and resources.

The committee feels that the work was intense and fruitful and is positive to be able to fulfil much of the set goals.





The European YWCAs

Member Associations: Belgium YWCA

By Marcia Banasko

The YWCA of Belgium has a rich history spanning over xx years. As organisation it has always been a safe space for women, young women and girls in their diversity and different backgrounds. Since the First World War the YWCA has assisted refugees and even today in 2014, the YWCA continues to be a great resource of comfort, training and development for refugees, new comers to the country and their families. In Louette the YWCA facilities a crafts and arts group for refugee women. In Antwerp the YWCA works in partnership with other local organisations to deliver the Girls in the City Programme. This programme is quite remarkable as young women who are new to the city enrol in the project and learn Flemish, engage in cultural assimilation, are offered support in seeking employment, network with other young women and develop vocational training skills. This programme is run by volunteers and is open to young women aged 20-30.

Platform 51 (The YWCA of England and Wales) Update

By Marcia Banasko

Platform 51 has “withdrawn from face-to-face services” following a restructure, said chief executive Carole Easton. It has relocated its head office from Oxford to London and has changed its name to Young Women’s Trust with a view to increasing its campaigning and influencing work. Platform 51’s spending has outstripped its income by more than £1m each year since 2008. For the year-end March 2012, the latest available accounts, its income was £4.8m with a spending of £7.2m and it employed 117 staff. The Young Women’s Trust now plans to refocus on campaigns and influencing social policies that directly impact young women and girls to ensure their voices and concerns are part of the decision making process.



The European YWCAs

Update on the Young Women's Strategy

By Nora Bandixen

Quite some time passed again since the Young Women's Strategy was finalised and distributed to the European YWCAs. We were very happy to receive positive reactions and constructive feedback to the Young Women's Strategy. Member associations offered meaningful reflections on language used and after some in depth discussions the following amendment has been made to the Young Women's Strategy to include:

"The European YWCAs was established to unite YWCA member associations in a European movement. It is a women-led organization which seeks to model shared, intergenerational leadership, ensuring at least 25% of its leadership positions are held by young women 30 years and under. The European YWCA is based on the Christian faith and is inclusive to all women and girls, regardless of their religion, sexual orientation or beliefs. EYWCAs represent YWCAs in 26 countries in Europe, which are driven by women and girls in local communities committed to the YWCA purpose."

Upcoming European Representatives Meeting

By Gitte Berle and Nora Bandixen

In October of 2014, the Committee will hold the European Representatives Meeting (ERM) hosted by the YWCA of Germany. Therefore, the committee has been working on putting together the needed documents during their meeting in Brussels. The first mailing was sent to the members on March 17th. It contain information about the registration process and the first batch of documents with relevant procedures regarding the business meeting of the European Representatives Meeting.

Through the European YWCAs facebook page the members had the opportunity to contribute to the meeting of the committee. As requested in one of these comments the committee will work on providing space at the ERM for the European YWCAs to prepare for the World Council of the World YWCA, taking place in 2015, hosted by the YWCA of Thailand. Like this the committee hopes the European YWCAs can stand in for their concerns with a common, strong voice at the World Council in Bangkok.

Take Action

By Gitte Berle and Nora Bandixen

Since the last European Representatives Meeting the Committee has been working on further improving its communication with the YWCAs of Europe, as well as building spaces for the YWCAs to communicate with one another in a more informal way.

So here we want to encourage you to have a look at it and participate in the

discussions and share news from your YWCA!

⇒ <https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanYwcaYoungWomensSummit?filter=2>

We would especially like to call to the European YWCAs to share their solidarity with our Ukrainian sisters in these terribly hard times!

Message

In the last Newsletter 2013 the YWCA of Ukraine sent out a strong message, illustrating the difficult situation of their country and the suffering of many of their people. The oppression and violence their county is going through doesn't go unnoticed!

Dear Ukrainian sisters, we send you our hearts and our strength to keep standing strong on your feet! Let us express our deepest respect for the protection you extend for those oppressed by the authorities and your active participation in standing up with and for the people. The brutality being used against the innocent is unacceptable. May you never lose your hope and keep giving the most vulnerable a voice to be heard!

For more information on the situation or on the Ukrainian YWCA contact:
Ulianets Natalia, President of the YWCA of Ukraine una01@mail.ru

Funding Idea – Erasmus +

The Erasmus+ program often has very interesting opportunities to apply for trainings abroad or even in your own country. The specific programs you can apply for individually you can find on the website of Erasmus+ that is only for your country. For instance: for the Netherlands there is a list of trainings to go to here: <http://www.erasmusplus.nl> or [here](#). For UK you can go to this website: <http://www.erasmusplus.org.uk>. Please search the internet for the page of your own country. Please bear in mind that they recently changed the name from Youth in Action to Erasmus+ so it could be that the page does not exist (yet).

[Click here to find a list of all the country websites](#)

Another great website to check regularly is the one of the [database of the European Youth forum](#). They often look for participants or facilitators for trainings and seminars all over Europe. Only for youth (so 18 until 35)

Also please look for other opportunities to find funding for any projects you want to organize as a National YWCA or maybe together with other YWCAs? Let us know if you need advice on how to start.