SecGen Report 2023-2024

I started the mandate with the great privilege of having a fruitful handover period with the previous Secretary-General, Özgecan Kara, which lasted 4 weeks. This did not only equip me with insightful information in the management of the office internally, but also meant that she could share with me the contact of partners and relevant stakeholders with whom I have been in contact with, and useful tips and tricks that are at the heart and soul of this report. Besides Özge’s support, counting with the senior staff member and with experienced EC members was also key for a smooth process of getting acquainted with the tasks and responsibilities of this position.

As I was writing this report, I realised that in contrast to the one Özge submitted last year, I never planned for a very in-depth numerical analysis. I should plan such a report when my mandate comes to an end, of course. This is a first-year-of-mandate stream of consciousness that has been cooked for weeks, that I hope helps explain where I have been coming from and, more importantly, will help a novice Secretary-General in the future.

It is also worth noting that some of the points I am putting in this report are adaptation of reflections that I shared with a coach that I sometimes see (or homework I have to do following her advice). There are also some points that come as a result of the exchanges with the mediator that is in charge of the ongoing process in the EC.

Managing the Office

During these 15 months, and as the previous Secretary-General already explained in her last report, the office was the biggest ever. The Selection Committee that evaluated my candidacy last year pointed out that I was lacking HR management experience. And they were right! While I have a very long experience managing groups of volunteers, being the director of an office is not the same. As a leader (or coordinator, or any other word that makes one feel comfortable with the hierarchy), one has to set up challenging yet achievable goals for the different teams and individuals, be open to criticism/suggestions while making it crystal clear that they are in charge, foster a team-building environment while contributing to the independence and autonomy of the members of the team... and overall juggle with a whole lot of things; but the labour relationship has an impact on all this, and I can’t just take my learnings as coordinator of, for example, the working group on Education of the Catalan Young Greens and expect to get everything to work smoothly in FYEG’s Office.

Trying to move away from the abstracts of how being employees affect our activity as members of society and interfere in our interpersonal relations, which I will enjoy discussing in informal spaces or theoretical debates, I am overall satisfied with my job in the office. While my background in labour unionism helps me make sense of what I
think should be ideal for the management of the office, I am no expert on Belgian (labour) law whatsoever. On top of that, we all come from different corners of Europe where things work in different ways, and each individual has different office experience - some have experience in for-profit organisations, some only in the nonprofit sector, some never put a foot in an office their life before signing their contract with us.

It is also very often that I find myself thanking and praising Özge (and Carol) for leaving the organisation in such a great state. I would be very dishonest if I listed any step, measure or proposal as the result of my only effort. The whole office is super understanding and I can only be forever grateful for their good faith and give me the benefit of the doubt. Of course, working with a sensible, caring and experienced individual like our Benni as EC responsible for the office also helped.

At the beginning of the mandate, we set up a promotion (and salary) grid to institutionalise a recognition for experience and foster staff retention. Chris and Cri reached the highest level possible (2+) in spring 2024. Before the GA and after successful appraisal talks, LA and Marta also got promoted to the level 1+ (which is entry level plus recognition of experience). Flo's appraisal talk should take place soon, and she will also move to 1+. With Chris and Cri departure, Julie will be the most senior worker. As she was on maternity leave for a while, her promotion to 1+ took place in December 2023.

All the workers, including interns, that I had the pleasure to work with since May 2023 have all been a pleasure to work with and contributed to the great campaign (see campaign report) that we implemented. I also want to take this occasion to specially thank Vita, who turned the position of Campaign and Events Assistant into a key part of the campaign not only for FYEG, but also for the whole Green European family.

Interns:
My mandate started with the last few months of the Spring 2023 Interns, Ángel Esteban Villabona and Alva Rödström as Communications Intern and Network Intern respectively. In Autumn 2023, Julia Berntsson was selected Communications Intern and Nefertiti Bikin-Kita Network Intern; and in Spring 2024 Vilde Tveit joined to support the Comms team and Catarina Bento Burstoff worked with me as Network Intern.

Administrative Grants and Fundraising
A few weeks after I was elected, with Özge's help, I applied for the Structural Grant of the European Youth Foundation (EYF) of the Council of Europe for 2024 and 2025, which gives us 30k per year. One year later (which is less than one month ago as I am writing this), together with Florence, we submitted the final report for the Structural
Grant of the EYF for the period 2022-2023. This is one of the easiest grants to apply for and report on.

Also from the EYF of the Council of Europe, we are beneficiaries of the AWP funds. Lena Anna is in touch with them every now and again, either reporting past activities, applying for co-funding for upcoming activities, or adapting to their ever-changing conditions. This grant is a bit more tricky, and often requires a lot of time and capacities from Lena Anna and the Admin Team. While I learnt lots of things in my first years as Secretary-General, this grant remains a mystery to me. I know that Kaća taught Cristiana when she was hired in 2020, and then Cristiana taught LA when she joined the Office in 2023, and our wonderful Admin Team is there to support her. From my side, I am keeping an eye on the project's finances overall and signing the reports.

In Spring 2024, we applied for the EU Commission's CERV. With the help of the Network Intern Catarina, we set up a task-division. We are still waiting to see if we are getting this grant next year. More often than not I am getting intrusive thoughts “What if we don't get it?”, and my heart goes absolutely wild, because I truly don't know. Regardless, I am very proud of our work. I must admit I have overall a good feeling about it because at the beginning of the year I went to a network event organised by the EU Commission for the beneficiaries, and they seemed to be so happy with us. By then, we had just submitted the report for 2023, and it was the first time that FYEG submitted such a report, and everything was alright!

**Coordinating and Preparing Statutory Activities of Events**

Mid-mandate, in December I organised together with the EC the Young Green Forum of the mandate. Normally, this meeting works as a prelude of the General Assembly. In this case, as it was implemented with many months of anticipation, it served as a moment to share with the Membership base the financial report of 2023 and plans of 2024, and also as a moment to present and promote the Activities planned for 2024, especially those created in the context of the EU elections campaign 2024. There were no Study Visits organised during this year, as none of the Candidate MOs expressed intention of becoming a Full MO.

**Facilitating the Executive Committee**

The main point of this mandate, I guess, is the crisis within the EC. It is also worth noting that the facilitation of the work of the EC is already a lot, without having to manage any crisis. I tried my best to include engaging formats in the design of the EC retreats, and I think that for the next mandate I still have many other strategies to work on. In these months, I organised retreats with a lot of anticipation (like the one in January), and also others with not so much (the last one in July was a bit hectic). I am especially proud of the process that I came up with to prepare one of the trickiest moments of the mandate: the task division. This takes place early in the mandate and
can be the origin of tensions because some EC members may get exactly what they want while others don’t. A word of advice: trust your sec-gen.

The facilitation of the EC is not only about the EC itself, but also about how to make the work of the EC a tool to make the work of the Office easier. Due to the crisis, the communications between the EC and the Office are at a difficult point. In order to protect the Office from being exposed to their often lengthy discussions, the EC is a bit conservative and protective of their discussions. Regardless of that, we already started the mandate with the task of trying to find out a better way to keep the communication and coordination between the two bodies. I am hoping that the next mandate will be when we find the way.

Crisis management

I want to be very straight-forward with explaining what I did as Secretary-General regarding the crisis in the EC. I want to make it clear that Srish called me and let me know that he was upset and was planning to do something, more or less similar to what he ended up doing and that all the MOs saw. From my side, I advised him to not go public and while trying to respect his feelings and needs as much as possible, offered the possibility of speaking to the rest of the members of the EC, truly convinced that a calm conversation with me would help them approach Srish and avoid this situation. At that point, Srish rejected it and you all know the rest.

I contacted the Advisory Committee, which had a couple calls with the EC. I spent long hours researching the appropriate support, for which I discarded lots of “mediators” that were basically very corporate, and I also put especial emphasis on finding someone who was racialised and/or belonging to a minoritised community. It was in the Study Session of CDN that I approached one of the facilitators, Cihan Kilic. I approached him because he explained on a couple occasions that had a background as a mediator and he is a migrant in Poland. He agreed to help me find someone to take care of the process, as he lacked the availability, and meanwhile he guided me in the design and implementation or preparatory meetings.

Dani Prisacariu was contacted following Cihan’s recommendation. I had a meeting with them and they created a pathway for the mediation based on the findings of my meeting with the 8 members of the EC.

I suggested to the EC to meet with the newly elected leadership of the Grüne Jugend. The whole situation is a bit more calm for me, because I have a very long experience in FYEG and I personally enjoy knowing things that happened before me. I think that this helped me approach this meeting with GJ in a way that helped them better understand the situation, but I also must admit that I think that the fact that Sean was in their Congress helped a lot.
Representation of FYEG and outreach

I had the pleasure of representing FYEG before our esteemed partners, those of the Green Family and also beyond. Two weeks into my mandate I already attended the General Assembly of the Green European Foundation, where I was invited as a speaker to present FYEG’s Elections Campaign Plans, and I also participated in the EGP Congress in Vienna. More is explained in the Activity Report. I also was a member of the FYEG delegation in the EGP online Congress in December, as well as in February in Lyon. As explained in the Activity Report, I attended some meetings of the EGP cctee. I have a very cordial relationship with the Secretary-General of the EGP, Benni de Marte.

I went to all the meetings of Political Party Youth Organisations (PPYOs) organised by the European Youth Forum (YFJ). There, we talked about our plans as youth organisations towards the elections, and got to know the plans of the YFJ. Together with Vita and Chris, I attended the retreat of the Greens/EFA Group and also their event “Green Social Summit” in Madrid. Speaking of the Group, I met with its Secretary-General, Vula Tsetsi, at the beginning of the mandate.

I went to a debate organised by the student organisation of the College of Europe in Bruges because the cospokes were not available.

Besides representing FYEG in other stakeholder’s events and meetings, I also get to know some organisations that come to Brussels that want to meet FYEG. Some are MOs, for example I received DWARS on a trip they did to Brussels, and some are not. For instance, I received a group of young Turkish people who were participating in a programme organised by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, or I went to meet a group of the Danish SFU that was visiting Brussels. I also joined the Secretary-General of the EGP in a meeting she had with the Green Society of the College of Europe.

In 2023 we did not go to COP because it was not in Europe, but we gave our badges to the Global Young Greens and to the African movement “Rise Up Movement”.

Conclusion

I started my commitment to the Green family more than a decade ago in the very humble local branch of the Young Greens of Catalonia in my hometown, Tarragona. Amidst the economic crisis of the late 2000s, many saw the EU and any institutional transnational experience as just another structure to further oppress the many for the benefit of a few. As lovers and defenders of the earth and all the beings that dwell within it, we know that true progress and liberation happens across borders, and I am so grateful that my organisation never fell into the trap of Euroscepticism. Fast forward a decade, being the Secretary-General of FYEG is an honour and a pleasure.

This past mandate was not easy at all. I knew that it wouldn’t be easy when I decided to run for this position, but of course if it was as difficult as I expected it would not really be that challenging.