

# Minutes of the first BV extraordinary General Assembly

Forum discussion from 14.02.2014-22.02.2014, chat session 22.02.2014, 10:00 CET-23:00 CET

**Moderator:** thorgal67

**Minutes taken by:** claudiaab

**People present during chat:** amnesiac84, claudiaab, duesseldorf james\_oder\_dave, jeanyves, lealone, mahouni200000, matthias, neo82 polyglot, railslide, shevek, sitatara, thorgal67, wind, zatopek

## 1. Evaluation

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### 1.1. Starting Positions

- Agreement on meeting leaders and conduct of BV business in case of confliction
  - [http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10697-1\\_1\\_Agreement\\_on\\_meeting\\_leaders\\_and\\_conduct\\_of\\_BV\\_business\\_in\\_case\\_of\\_confliction](http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10697-1_1_Agreement_on_meeting_leaders_and_conduct_of_BV_business_in_case_of_confliction)

Forum:

The eGA agreed on thorgal67 as moderator of the eGA chat session, since the secretary (claudiaab) is member of the BoD, which is under scrutiny. Some members expressed some doubts because of the personal relation between thorgal67 and claudiaab, but since most members did not consider this a problem and the alternative moderator was no longer available, there was a consensus for thorgal67.

Forum:

Pablobd announced his resignation only one day before the chat session. So only two BoD members were still left.

Different scenarios about **conduct of BV business and elections of a BoD** were discussed in the forum and in the chat:

- Interim BoD, possibly with the two BoD members and 2-3 appointed members
- Refilling the vacant seats in an election (up to 10)
- Refilling to the minimum of 3 seats (only one)
- Having a vote of (no) confidence for the remaining BoD
- Resignation of the remaining BoD and new elections in a second eGA

Appointing members to a BoD instead of electing them did not seem to be covered by the statutes and by the democratic principles of BV. With all other options the most problematic point was how to ensure day-to-day business between this eGA and a second one. The **two remaining BoD members then offered their resignation with effect from a second eGA for new elections**. In the meantime they would form an interim BoD. Since even handling only day-to-day business could prove problematic for two persons only, it was decided to start a list - open to all BV members - to offer their help to the interim BoD.

- **Risk assessment** of the possible outcome of the extraordinary General Assembly

Forum: <http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10698?sidTB=AY5ZKyKQx8zqT8Zz7z6UEfl68Z6>

#### **A. The BoD gets a vote of confidence**

- 1. we risk losing 2 volunteers
- 2. we risk losing more BoD members in case the vote is tight or not to their liking

#### **B. The BoD gets a vote of no-confidence**

- 3. we risk that not enough candidates come forward for the next election
- 4. we risk BoD members stepping down from their other volunteer positions

Since in the course of the eGA further BoD members and also more volunteers stepped down, many of the risks came true even without a vote of (no) confidence.

- **Statements about the situation leading to the eGA**

<http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10605?sidTB=EOlszL8-M5124Z9pDkGait72E3a>

- Resignation from BoD and volunteer positions after attempt to change the situation within the BoD failed: main reason: wrong attitude of the Executive towards volunteers
- Suspension of volunteer work because of lack of support, responsiveness and communication by sysadmins (that are also BoD members)
- BoD member 1: situation in the BoD:
  - difficult to reach consensus
  - Clash of communication styles
  - Discussions often not focused enough on content
  - On several accounts: Lack of empathy and respect on the side of the Executive
  - Executive still had to comply with his promises and visions
- BoD member 2:
  - Lack of positive working atmosphere
  - Minor and major internal conflicts
  - Split in two blocks
  - Regret that the 7 per se interesting and competent BoD members didn't manage to complement each other's talents rather than fight about different issues and approaches.
- Statements of other BoD members were missing, a common statement of the BoD was missing, too.

## **1.2. Evaluation of the events leading to the call for the extraordinary General Assembly**

[http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10665-](http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10665-1.2)

1.2 Evaluation of the events leading to the call for the extraordinary General Assembly

- Role of individual BoD members and involved volunteers

- Start of the BoD was considered to be one of the roots of the problems: Executive delegate only wanted to stay in the BoD if he or one other person would be Executive. Already there two blocks formed.
- Difficult start for the Executive since initially he was not supported by all BoD members
- confidentiality/privacy issue: publishing (to a limited circle) private BoD conversations and private mails to make one's point
  - Difficult balancing act to give BV members enough information to decide whether an eGA was necessary or not and violating privacy issues.
  - More abstract formulations could have been used instead of quoting private conversations. Examples could have been forwarded in case the other party contested the accusations
  - BV members found themselves thoroughly informed after the resignation report, but acknowledge that publishing private / BoD conversations is not fair and very painful to the other party
- Evaluation of the reactions and problem solving after the call for the extraordinary General Assembly
  - Prompter reaction of the BoD would have been desirable
  - Call for an intermediary would have been desirable
  - Some (individual) BoD reactions were criticized
  - The lack of a common BoD statement was criticized

### 1.3. Votes of no confidence

[http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10614-1\\_3\\_Votes\\_of\\_no\\_confidence](http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10614-1_3_Votes_of_no_confidence)

*This point was discussed partly at this stage, partly with 1.1. The result of the discussion is summarized in 1.1.*

## 2. Organization of Work and BoD

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### 2.1. Expectations of BoD members p. 16

[http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10612-2\\_1\\_expectation\\_of\\_BoD\\_members\\_time\\_commitment](http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10612-2_1_expectation_of_BoD_members_time_commitment)

- Discuss and outline more clearly what is expected of BoD members.
  - Keeping their promises
  - Responsiveness
  - Sticking to the mandates given by the GA
- What kind of time commitment is expected?
  - It depends on a lot of external factors; a BoD candidate should be willing to spend 2-3 hours per week for BoD issues. It will most likely be less, but there can be times with many issues going on at the same time so that it might also be more. This time does not include following the forum and regular volunteering.

[http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10613-2\\_1\\_expectation\\_of\\_BoD\\_members\\_conflict\\_situations](http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10613-2_1_expectation_of_BoD_members_conflict_situations)

- What to do in case of an interpersonal conflict?

- Finding a solution to solve the "if I don't get X, I will quit" problem - and the opposite "if Y happens, I will quit"?
  - People agreed that it in general this can't be avoided
  - Be prepared for conflicts when you run for BoD
  - Be prepared for decisions taken against your own opinion
  - When electing a BoD member take into account personal and professional experience, especially with regards to conflict resolution
- Question about ideal / problematic size of BoD
  - Size wasn't the problematic point in this situation. Currently a small BoD of 3 is not big enough to be able to handle all the tasks. 10+ BoDs will probably make meetings and discussions very complicated
- One BoD member with expert French and willing to read legal texts would be desirable
  - Could also be handled by advisory member

## 2.2. Expectations of BV members

[http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10615-2\\_2\\_Expectations\\_of\\_BV\\_members](http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10615-2_2_Expectations_of_BV_members)

- Support the BoD more: the task list derived from the 2013 GA was too long even for 7 BoD members.
- Clearly state in a GA whether a low-profile or proactive BoD is wanted
- How to get more done with less discussion?
  - In BoD: proposal system, where it fits
  - Creating working groups (also BoD)
  - Smaller BoD (but not too small)
  - Keeping discussions in expert circles only
  - Electing a less diverse BoD
  - Individual choice: Picking teams for volunteering that require action more than discussions (support team, NMBW etc.)
  - Having measurable objectives as to what we want BW to be in x years time
  - ← For BoD: strategic decisions are more important than actually doing things, so discussions are vital (see job description of a manager...)
  - ← ensure a good discussion culture; more things are actually done by people open for discussions and willing to listen
- How to avoid discussion fatigue? (see above)
- Will we have another eGA in 3 months?
  - This topic was not discussed
- Do we tolerate hate speech? Are there consequences?
  - This topic as not discussed

## 2.3. Communication

<http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10616-2> 3 Communication

- Forum moderation in BV groups
  - Self-moderation, self-regulation and mature behaviour is expected (other BV members are expected to point out rude behaviour)
  - Rude forum behaviour might be revealing for deciding on BoD elections, so better not moderate it
  - Some forum rules might not be practicable in some volunteer teams (e.g. quoting from sb's post in another thread, depending on how forum mods organize their work, this might be a normal practice; similar issues for Safety Team)
  - → no forum moderation in all BV groups (group hierarchy is soon to come, then this can be achieved more easily)
  - In case of violation of Volunteer Code of Conduct + ToU + legal issues and after asking self-regulation there should be an escalation path (complaint with Ombudsperson, BoD, Safety Team. BV/eGA)
- We presumably all have the same goal, how can we make sure that communication stays friendly and effective?
  - Self-regulation
- Spend more time on writing less? (*only covered in forum*)
  - Sometimes this would really make sense, yes.  
On the other hand reading about complex issues in twitter-like posts is not ideal/easy/appropriate. Very short often comes over as harsh or even aggressive, even though the intention was completely different. Since our communication is limited to text (i.e. no facial expressions, no tone etc.) a bit more context or explanation is needed.
  - Facilitate scanning a text by using lists, keywords, bold...
  - Use some structure instead of repetitions and digressions.

## 2.4. Improving the way we elect the BoD

<http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10617?sidTB=EOlszL8-M5124Z9pDkGait72E3a>

- Have BoD candidates indicate which functions they aspire, how much time they expect to spend on BV/BW, etc.
- For the eGA: chat sessions to ask BoD candidates questions, usually this can be done in group and during the live GA
- In the long run a system to have two votes for each candidate, (one general: BoD yes or no, one for the position) could be thought about. This needs some more brainstorming
- Rethink the sentence saying that 'if you don't have any good reasons to vote against someone vote for him'

# 3. Statutes and rules and regulations

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## 3.0. General

Mandate for a general makeover of statutes and rules and regulations was given to the next BoD

### 3.1. Legal question: can BeWelcome be sold

We will continue with this discussion in the normal BV member

group: <http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/94/forum/s10535->

Legal Question Can BeVolunteer sell BeWelcome

*This issue was not discussed during the chat session; the current status is: the categoric NO answer had to be withdrawn and we need to find a competent lawyer to make sure the answer can soon be NO again*

## 3.2. BoD procedures

### 3.2.1. BoD meetings public when possible

- Suggestion: Public if it can be public, BV if it can be BV, private BoD discussion only as a last resort (public means that a wider circle of people can read, not that everyone can participate in discussions)
  - eGA gave a mandate to the next BoD to continue with the practice of having public BoD meetings, but did not want to regulate the number of public meetings; A majority was in favour of not adding this to the rules and regulations

### 3.2.2. Improving work flow of BoD between official meetings

<http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10618?sidTB=EOIszL8-M5124Z9pDkGait72E3a>

see: [http://www.bewelcome.org/wiki/BoD\\_Meeting\\_10.12.2013#line112](http://www.bewelcome.org/wiki/BoD_Meeting_10.12.2013#line112) Integration in the rules and regulations (with percentage rather than absolute numbers)

- This suggestion will be voted on in the next eGA (since it would otherwise have been the only poll)

## 3.3. Ensuring continuity in running BeVolunteer

<http://www.bewelcome.org/forums/s10666?sidTB=IR,MWIn2pH87unWH4DZNH0spO1f>

- **extending the Term of office of BoD** to more than just one year
  - there was a consensus that this suggestion would not improve the situation; BoD members should, however, be encouraged to run a second time
  - another suggestion about limiting the number of terms a BV member can be member of the BoD was discussed and rejected
- For more organizational continuity: set up an **advisory board**, for longer than one year
  - On an informal level this is already in place for BV members; the eGA didn't see the need to institutionalize this. A list of people willing to help with advise would be helpful, however
  - The suggestion came up to have an advisory board of external organizations once we have the contacts to initiate something like this

- appointment of **consultative members**, members of the association and/or third parties see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advisory\\_board](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advisory_board)
  - see above
- **strengthening BV**; BV is probably the best and most democratic advisory board we could have. Main problem: information only supposed to be viewed by a limited number of people (for personal, legal or financial reasons).
- CFO: treasurer CEO: chairman? We could have a CTO who is not necessarily part of the BoD, so could be appointed by the BoD in a more flexible way.
  - The eGA did not completely understand this suggestion; for a CTO it should be possible for a BoD to appoint one

## 4. Volunteering and other topics

<http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/1815/forum/s10668?sidTB=IR,MWIn2pH87unWH4DZNH0spO1f>

- General suggestion: start an online survey for inactive volunteers to get some more reliable answers
- Volunteer burnout: Create some guidelines, how to avoid? How to avoid the burnout from spreading?
  - Forum: increase the number of volunteers so that individual volunteers don't feel forced to take on too many tasks because otherwise nobody else would do them
- How to attract *and* keep technically skilled people in BV and the BoD?
  - Rox: the goal is/was to only fix bugs and maybe code some community driven tools; for programmers it's more attractive to contribute to something with more future
  - Rox could still be saved BUT both Rox and welen are based on php, which is a bit outdated in the programmers' scene, so neither project is extremely attractive for new people
  - Welen: based on php (see above)
  - Suggestion: using a system based on a series of independent daemons that communicate with each other via signed messages; this would allow to modularize the system to the extreme, so each programmer could use his/her preferred language and paradigm
    - ⇔ Communication would even be more vital
  - Suggestion: a call for more low-key old school programmers (⇔ not so successful in the past)
  - Suggestion: launching a competition to code some features
    - ⇔ a (public) API would be needed for this and a Terms of Service document (API users need to know what they are allowed to do and what they aren't)
      - Terms of Service could be written by non-techs (thorgal67, duesseldorf, sitatara, claudiaab)

- Consolidate the sysadmin base: 2-3 sysadmins with time and BV membership and then have 2 new volunteers to start on non-sensitive server
  - Have a contact person for new coders that can direct them to the right tasks / mentors and guide them a bit; this contact person should also bridge between BoD and Devs
  - Send out a call for new coders in a newsletter once we have a stable sysadmin situation
- Define and separate roles? BW volunteering / BV membership / BoD
    - Forum: limiting the number of volunteer positions was discussed:
      - Too many positions and too big workload: risk of volunteer fatigue
      - ← definition of a manageable workload is subjective, volunteers need to take care of themselves
      - ← BeWelcome is not in the position to reject volunteer offers of highly involved volunteers, much of the work would not be done without some volunteers taking on several positions
      - Key volunteer positions should ideally be taken by two volunteers to ensure continuity in case one volunteer resigns
    - Roles of Volunteer Coordinator and Communication Coordinator should be outlined in the BV forum, then discussed, how to fill these roles (inside or outside the BoD)
      - An external (permanent) Communication Coordinator could closely work together with the BoD Secretary and the Executive
      - For a Volunteer Coordinator we could have one inside the BoD and one outside (permanently)
    - Combination of different roles:
      - BoD member + forum moderator – at the moment not desired by forum mods, but in general not unthinkable
      - BoD member + ombudsperson: not possible
- Co-operations with other non-profit and volunteer based organisations, e.g. international student organisations, -<http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/94/forum/s10257->  
Co operation with international organisations non profit to widen the member base outside of Europe but also inside
  - IFISO is the informal Forum of international student organisations, such as Erasmus Students Network, AEGEE, European Landscape Architecture Students Association (ELASA) and many more. Most of the organisations used some simple methods to travel. In ELASA people asked for accommodation on the mailing list. In EFPSA they even created a really basic travel network, it's not online any more. Probably most of the members of these associations are right now using other hospex networks



- What is the use for BeWelcome, BeVolunteer? We would gain independence from other hospex networks, we could gain new members outside the bigger and older hospex networks. Some of the associations act worldwide like the International Veterinary Students Association. They have members all around the globe. All the IFISO member organisations are run by volunteers, non-profit and non-political, so there's a strong relation to BeWelcome.
- What do we need to offer? The minimum offer is an improved search function, so that it's possible to search the categories of each profile, e.g. the section "organisations I'm member of". Another minimum offer is more privacy. That's one of the few reasons, how we can convince them to use BeWelcome and not commercial alternatives.
- In return they should promote BeVolunteer/ BeWelcome on their websites
  - There will be a conference in May where we could pulse some officials about a cooperation;
  - In general a cooperation would be desirable from our side, but at the moment not so high priority

forum only:

- Privacy and transparency - a survey among BeVolunteer members (forum only)
  - Suggestion: Public API would offer users granularity for their privacy settings
  - Suggestion: Access to sensitive data should only be granted to BV members who have also signed an NDA (e.g. sysadmins)