BeVolunteer Annual Report 2022-2023

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1. Board of Directors report: Short overview of main activities and milestones

1.1 BeWelcome website

The main events on BeWelcome during the 2022-2023 term were as follows:

- A new member survey was conducted, the last one dating from 2017. It had been planned to run this survey sooner, but it was postponed because of covid. Thanks to this survey, we now have an updated picture of our members' satisfaction and wishes that will help us define priorities. The global results are quite positive and encouraging.
- 2 major site updates were released, in addition to several bug fixes introduced during the year. The main improvements are:
  - o the "last login date' information now takes into account the latest time a member was active on BeWelcome, instead of the date of login which was misleading (members using the "stay logged in" option looked to be inactive).
  - o Some of the profile pages were rewritten (this was defined as a development priority by the 2022 GA).
  - o The location search pages (for member search, setting one's location and sign-up) were updated with the format already used on the Trips page, and the search algorithm was improved.
  - o Upload of images (profile picture and gallery) was made more simple and user-friendly.
- A new clean-up of inactive members (who didn't log in after 5 reminders) was performed on October 29th, in a continued effort to keep an active member base and display realistic statistics. 63,838 members were suspended. It was found that the count of login reminders sent, on which the previous clean-up had been based, was not accurate: hence the higher count of suspensions this time (compared to 18,632 in 2022).
- The milestone of 250,000 members was crossed in August 2023. A press release was issued on that occasion. After the clean-up, the member base stands just above 200,000.
- 2 newsletters were published, with a third one being prepared at the time of writing this report.
- A new payment option by credit card was introduced, using HelloAsso as a service provider. Compared to the existing option with Paypal (which will remain available), HelloAsso are not taking fees and creating an account is not required. It may make it easier for some members (Support already received feedback from 1 member who wasn't able to donate through Paypal and successfully did it through HelloAsso). It is too early to see if this option will be successful, since it was only made public in late October.
- A serial thief has been detected by the Safety Team on BeWelcome. Several accounts were banned, and a complaint was filed with the French police in the name of BeVolunteer (since the thief was detected in France). Contacts were taken with other hospitality networks where this thief was also active.
- The BeWelcome trademark was renewed for the next 10 years.
- According to a decision from the 2022 General Assembly, 7 groups that were found in breach of the BeWelcome terms of use (used to find sexual partners) were deleted. This triggered a forum discussion and protests from a few members who used these groups for legitimate purposes. But the goal of preventing publicly displayed misuse of BeWelcome for sexual purposes was reached: the number of suspicious posts decreased significantly, though they still happen in a few groups.

1.2 BeWelcome members and activity

Membership is compared roughly on the basis of the Annual Report period, which ends in October or November of the year that the Annual Report is compiled. As of the end of October, 2023, BeWelcome had about 200,000 members.

This is a loss of roughly 15,000 members compared to last year, which is explained by the clean-up of inactive members.

In 2022, for the first general clean-up performed by BeWelcome, we suspended members who had not logged in after 5 reminders. This was meant to be roughly 5 years without login. About 18,000 members were suspended at that time.

However, while preparing for this year's clean-up, it was found that the count of login reminders sent was not accurate due to some issues in the code. Therefore, about 41,000 members were not included in last year's clean-up despite being inactive for more than 5 years. As a consequence, this year the criterion applied for suspension was just the last login date older than 5 years, disregarding the number of login reminders received (which is wrong in the database). So those 41,000 members were included in the clean-up, along with 22,000 who are the "new" inactive ones (they had been inactive for 4 years in 2022 and still didn't log in this year). Thus the high global count of roughly 63,000 members suspended.

Despite the net loss, nearly 50,000 new members joined BeWelcome this year. This count of new members is slightly lower than in the 2021-2022 term (60,000 new members), but still more sustained than any other year before. Slowing down of the growth may be attributed to a lesser influx of members leaving Couchsurfing.com, since most of those who wanted to leave after the 2020 payment policy change must have done so by now.

During the period since the last GA, 3 members signed an NDA (nondisclosure agreement) as part of active volunteering for BeWelcome in Support and Communication teams (as of 03/11/2023).

The Ombudsman elected at the latest GA resigned during the year, because of feeling that the Ombudsperson's position was not made visible enough to members. The previous Ombudsman agreed to take up the job again and was appointed by the BoD.

Activity of the members (compiled on November 1st, 2023 for the GA 2023, using BW statistics (https://www.bewelcome.org/about/stats):

- During the last 4 weeks only 6,7% of members did log in (~ 13500 members). 56% of members did NOT log in during the last 12 months. The percentage of members with a recent login has mechanically increased, and the percentage of those without login for more than a year has decreased, thanks to the clean-up of inactive members. Before the clean-up, the percentage of members active during the last 4 weeks was at 5,6%, stable from last year.

- A change in the way the last login date is calculated was implemented during the year, but it looks like it didn't have a significant effect on global site statistics.

- Same statistics for the last years:
  - Nov 2023: 6,7% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 56% did not log in during the last 12 months
  - Oct 2022: 5,8% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 61% did not log in during the last 12 months
  - Nov 2021: 5,2% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 70% did not log in during the last 12 months
  - Nov 2020: 2,5% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 79% did not log in during the last 12 months
  - Nov 2019: 2,2% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 86% did not log in during the last 12 months
  - Nov 2018: 4% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 85% did not log in during the last 12 months
  - Nov 2017: 6% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 76% did not log in during the last 12 months

In terms of activity, some more statistics for the last years (computed from October 15th to October 14th):
2023: 10576 accepted requests, 3148 trips created, 31 accepted invitations, 367 activities created
2022: 8932 accepted requests, 1890 trips created, 38 accepted invitations, 639 activities created
The increase of accepted requests is encouraging, showing a growing activity.
The increase in trips number is expected since the feature was only introduced in 2022. However, it fails to

be converted into hosting experiences (accepted invitations).

The drop in activities number may be related to the increase in trips, because some members posted their trip as an activity before the Trips feature was available. But this is probably not the only reason. Lack of promotion on BeWelcome and lack of attendance can be discouraging for activity organisers.

1.3 BeVolunteer organization

1.3.1 Board of Directors

- The 2022-2023 BoD was made up of 3 members only, so it has not been possible to do much more than take care of daily business.
- With only 3 members, definition of the BoD roles has been straightforward since 3 roles are already defined in BV statutes.
- All members of the new BoD had already been part of the BoD before, in the same roles, which enabled the BoD to run smoothly.
- 1 BoD member was appointed to be the contact person for each team. This was not strictly necessary, as all BoD members anyway have contacts with several teams, but it is still advisable to have 1 identified contact person for each team.
- Meetings: the BoD organised 12 video meetings (once a month).
- The BoD started a new donation campaign in December 2022. See financial report for more detailed information.
- Writing of an organisation procedure for the BoD is ongoing, in order to make it easier for new BoD members. This procedure will describe the BoD's main tasks and how they are done, especially administrative tasks.
- Daily activities included communication with new volunteers and with the Survey team, and partaking in forum discussions about BeWelcome. Special coordination with the Safety Team was also required in the case of the serial thief.
- Volunteer resources: as before, the lack of active developers and sysadmins has been the major issue. Forum Moderation team, having lost 1 volunteer, is also seriously understaffed.
- We are still not able to take care of server issues in a suitable way. Migration of the old server is still not done, and Nextcloud is still not working properly… It has been difficult for the BoD to get answers from the sysadmins.
- The BoD will make a proposal for the new budget (2023-2024). More details can be found in the section about Financial Statement and Budget.
- The BoD also took charge of organising the 2023 GA: finding possible locations, voting about the date and place, sending invitations, planning the schedule, preparing the documentation (annual and financial reports)…

1.3.2 BeVolunteer members

BeVolunteer currently has 46 members, 28 of which are eligible to vote.

During the year, 2 new members have joined BV. 3 memberships were cancelled this year by the BoD, according to the Statutes (not joining the vote for 2 years in a row). 1 member was excluded by decision from the 2022 General Assembly. 1 member resigned and was granted the status of honorary member. A total of 14 members are honorary members. The honorary membership is "a class of membership that is non-voting, confers no rights or privileges […]".

Statistics on General Assemblies and members eligible to vote

Year	BV members	Members eligible to vote	BoD candidates
GA 2023	46	28	currently 2

GA 2022	48	32	3
GA 2021	43	26	3
GA 2020	40	24	5
GA 2019	48	23	5
GA 2018	47	20	7
eGA 2017	48	36	NA
GA 2017	48	37	3
GA 2016	66	47	5
GA 2015	63	23	6
GA 2014	60	22	6
eGA 2014	60	34	3
GA 2013	50	23	7
GA 2012	45	16	4
GA 2011	43	21	5

2. Finances

2.1. Financial Report

The financial year of BeVolunteer was from October 1st, 2022 until September 30th, 2023. The full financial report with incomes and expenses can be found in a separate document.

The donation campaign was started in December 2022. The donation goal of € 4912 was not reached by the end of September 2023 and at the closing of the financial year (30/09/2023) we had received 2318,43 euro, which is approximately 48% of our goal. Reason for not reaching our goal after 9 months was mainly due to the lack of large donations. Although the Spring newsletter and FaceBook campaign triggered several smaller donations, it was not as successful as previous years. We received a total of 109 donations, the average amount donated is about €21, as compared to the usual average of €25. Most donations came from Germany, followed by Italy and France. We also received € 55,07 commission on the sale of T-Shirts.

We added a new donation option: HelloAsso, which allows members to donate by credit card without any donation fee. So far we received 2 donations. But this option was not made public on BeWelcome before the end of the financial year, so it will only be effective for the next donation campaign.

Server costs were still higher than 2 years ago due to the need for an extra server, waiting for the migration of OTRS and the Production server. At the end of the term, we had a net loss of €1811,58. This was mainly because we did not reach our donation goal, and the ongoing increased server costs. We also had exceptional expenses in this financial year for promotional material and trademark renewal.

At the end of the term, we had €11,174.18 of which €2,000 is still assigned as an emergency fund.

2.2. Budget 2022-2023

Details of the budget proposal are in a separate document.

We currently have more than € 11.170 in our bank account, of which more than € 9.170 is readily available.

At the GA the BV members will have the opportunity to discuss and adapt the current proposal. The BoD suggests to put the donations' goal at €3050 in order to reflect our real running costs.

3. Team Status Reports

3.1. Frontend/ Design Team

Design is currently maintained by the developers, please see section 3.3.

3.2. Sysadmin Team

No feedback was given by the Sysadmin team for the annual report.
Most of the sysadmin team members stopped being active, including the previous team coordinator. They either didn't have enough time, or felt they were not able contribute because of not having a sufficient knowledge of the BW system and relevant IT skills. All sysadmin work is now done by a single volunteer with help from our developer.
It was tried to organize video meetings with the team, but attendance was low so the meetings were not held regularly.
Because of this situation, progress on the ongoing work was slow. The server migration, which requires a lot of preliminary work like setting up backups and reviewing the organization of servers, is not yet effective.

3.3. Development Team

BW only has 1 main developer who does all of the work by himself. The workload is always high, especially now that there is no more dedicated Design Team. For several years we have not been able to find new developers willing to get involved for a long-term commitment. The new volunteers who had started getting involved in 2022 are not active anymore.

3.4. Communication Team

3.4.1 Membership

November 2021 - 26 members
September 2022 - 41 members
September 2023 - 32 members

During the summer of 2023, subaculture asked members who wanted to stay active to reply to a thread in the Communication Team group or answer privately. Those who didn't want to sign up to a task or couldn't contribute at this time, were removed from the group and asked to re-join once they have the time and motivation to contribute. This led to a 60% reduction in members. It may indicate better screening, or more direction for new volunteers.

The main task areas include:

* **Newsletter and Community News team**
* **Social Media Team**
* **Content Creation and Design team**
* **External Communication and outreach team**
* **Support and Analytics Team**
* **Activity Moderation Team**

However, the workload system remains poor and relies on a members' own initiative and motivation. There are many people who want to join the group, but many don't have communication experience, and nobody has taken the lead until now.

3.4.2 Internal Communication

- **Newsletter**

A lot of communication remains internal with the aim of motivating existing members to use the site for hospitality-related activities. While it is a necessary and important task, there is little external communications apart from profiles in social media such as Facebook and Instagram. The primary means of internal communication is through the newsletter and community news.

Newsletters sent:

year	# Newsletters sent
2023-2023	2
2021-2022	3
2020-2021	3
2019-2020	1
2018-2019	0
2017-2018	1
2016-2017	1

- **Community News**

The BoD gave more responsibility to take care of the front-page 'community news' which is only seen if members log in to the site.

Year	stories
2022-2023	8
2021 - 2022	8
2020 - 2021	9
2019 - 2020	11
2018 - 2019	8
2017 - 2018	24
2016 - 2017	22
2015 - 2016	8

The idea was to create at least one story with pictures per month, that have emotional appeal, rather than technical updates. None of the volunteers was dedicated enough to dive into the necessary research to find recently active members, contact them about their experiences and then write their stories.

3.4.3 External Communication

The communication team works together to push consistent messages through internal tools such as the BW newsletter, and external tools such as Facebook and Twitter.

- **Facebook -** https://www.facebook.com/bewelcome.org

Likes to the Facebook group:

likes	year
1,777	2013
2,600	2014
3,576	2015
4,225	2016
4,751	2017
6,050	2018
6,171	2019
6,700	2020
7,357	2021
7,500	2022
7,700	2023

The team uses the page to motivate BW members in their everyday life to engage more with bewelcome.org (i.e. fundraising drives on the main site, building awareness of new site developments, calls to action). Due to a BoD strategic decision, Facebook posts do not contain 'general' information related to travel, tourism, hospitality. BW doesn't use Facebook in any commercial sense, since we are not driving users from BeWelcome to Facebook, but vice-versa. There is no host-guest interaction on the Facebook page. The communication team is constantly looking for content.

There is a public BeWelcome group (https://www.facebook.com/groups/BeWelcome/), where members can post, and seek to connect.

Members	year
2000	2015
1937	2018
1931	2019
2900	2020
3296	2021
3900	2022
4181	2023

It is linked to the official BW page. Many organizations do this to encourage discussion around their brands. However, it's hard to know what content should be allowed there. Given the growth of pornographic postings, we had to start approving posts in 2023.

Proposal: Should there be a means for members to submit their pictures and stories? Maybe shareyourcontent@bewelcome.org

- **X - formerly known as Twitter -** https://twitter.com/bewelcome?lang=en

The **@BeWelcome** account had:

year	followers
2013	450
2014	535
2015	727
2016	805
2017	836
2018	850
2019	925
2020	1026
2021	1081
2022	1118
2023	1108

There is less growth in Twitter/X followers in 2022-2023. In 2023 it stagnated with few less followers. Like the Facebook account, 'tweets' reflect readers back to bewelcome.org. Followers and readers 'retweet' positive messages like hospitality experiences or stories related to BeWelcome. The Communication Team is constantly looking for more interesting input and it is a task for the team to encourage members to let the team know about their stories if they want them published. katharinegk is no longer admin of the X/Twitter page, after leaving the Communications Team in 2023 because of a moderation decision.

- **Instagram** - https://www.instagram.com/bewelcome.hospitality/?hl=en

duesseldorf was able to secure the formerly unused channel "@bewelcome" for us. She also started to fill it with content (78 posts between December 2022 and September 2023). The profile in 2023 has 550 followers. It is still basically a one-woman-thing. We lack content and an engagement strategy. The former Instagram profile "bewelcome.hospitality" has become inactive at this point: https://www.instagram.com/bewelcome.hospitality/?hl=en
wanderlust1319 who took care of the old profile is still contributing from time to time to the new profile.

- **Wikipedia page -** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BeWelcome

Duesseldorf and Leonidasz have been drafting a new article for the English Wikipedia and looked for reliable sources and papers. It is not published but it is written in framapad. One suggestion was we follow the structure of couchsurfing page, so the moderators have no excuse for deleting it. We try to add as much as possible sources on each line, even word by word.

The page exists in 16 other languages other than English.

3.4.4 Spreadshirt

The BeWelcome shop at Spreadshirt primarily serves the European market. It had a small number of sales in 2023, with a commission payout of 11.20 Euro between January and October 2023.

It would be good to have more designs - so far no designer stepped forward and it is a task to organize this. Merchandise is quite expensive, and we are on the lookout for alternative shops.

e.g. https://www.printful.com/, SPOD, Printify Apliiq Dropship, Teelaunch, CustomCat, Lulu Xpress, T-Pop, JetPrint: Print On Demand, Easy Print on Demand

3.4.5 Media requests

Media requests, interviews and requests for information were handled by member duesseldorf who is also member of the Communications Team. The Communication Team as such does not receive or manage media requests.

3.4.6 The BeWelcome Video Channel

Located at https://vimeo.com/bewelcome since September 2020.
The number of videos were 8 in 2022, in 2023 they are 9.
We do not have many visitors/followers, but use the videos hosted on VIMEO on social media.

Proposal: *Add icons for the BeWelcome twitter, Facebook, and other social media outlets to the footer of BeWelcome.org. However, many volunteers do not want to drive traffic from bewelcome.org to social media sites. They want the opposite to occur. Should we also have a youtube channel even with same videos like vimeo?*

3.4.7 Google Ads

Google Ad Grants is a program that credits non-profits $10,000 every month to advertise on Google.com. It is also open to French non-profits. After the 2016 General Assembly BeWelcome joined the Google for non-profits program.

In 2022-2023, we have sought to maximise the spend by introducing worldwide campaigns. While searches based on derivates of couchsurfing still get most traction ("couchsurfers, couchsurfing app etc), there has been an increase in those specifically searching for BeWelcome.

The worldwide campaigns are the most successful: 127,806 clicks from ads over the past year, and 888,710 impressions. The CTR 14.38% and cost was $114,590.44. A good CTR for Google Ads should fall somewhere between 3 and 5%. Therefore, we are doing as well as possible, with those keywords.

3.4.8 Analytics

We only have access to analytics since October 2020, via server logs imported into Matomo. However, it doesn't tell us how many of those who find us via Google Ads actually sign up. We haven't really used the data, but moved the sub-group back into the Communications Team group -
https://www.bewelcome.org/group/2845

3.4.9 CANVA and designs

Using CANVA, the team continue to produce a number of infographics to communicate the platform's value points. For example, "Ten reasons to join BeWelcome" has been translated to various languages. These have

been posted to groups and discussion boards online and uploaded to https://bewelcome.github.io/community-gallery/ so that members can find and use them quickly.

3.4.10 Press Releases

One press release to inform about reaching 250,000 members was written and published in 2022-2023. These are important, as they are official markers, and can be used by journalists, and in Wikipedia updates. subaculture sent the press release to 20+ influencers and bloggers, but none would take up the story or promote BeWelcome without payment.

https://www.pr.com/press-release/890936

3.4.11 Medium

Medium is essentially a cross between a blogging platform and a social media site. Writers can publish articles, essays, tutorials, and more, while also interacting with their readers. The BeWelcome page is https://bewelcome.medium.com/

Subaculture published two stories in 2023:
https://bewelcome.medium.com/bewelcome-the-largest-non-profit-hospitality-exchange-network-reaches-milestone-in-membership-57c60b5d49c3#:
https://bewelcome.medium.com/is-there-such-a-thing-as-ethical-couch-surfing-and-does-it-matter-9ee7524f86e

3.4.12 Media Outreach

A new method to keep track of which journalists we reach out to journalists was introduced.

Other: Individual members have sought to promote BeWelcome via discussions on Twitter, Facebook, Reddit and Quora. This is an important, but under-valued and under-resourced task. subaculture answers many facebook queries, comments on twitter/X, couchsurfing groups etc.

3.4.13 Activity moderation team

There are still not many activities published by BW members. Activity moderation isn't a lot of work for the 5 volunteers involved. It mainly means checking the activities regularly. On the other hand, most volunteers are not very active. BeWelcome is not promoting activities efficiently, which doesn't help staying motivated to dedicate time for this section of the site.

Thirty or so spam activities were deleted, and a few others which were just hosting requests. Those members were redirected to the Trips feature.

The activity rules are not too strictly enforced, especially about activities with a long duration, as there is currently no issue of clogging the activities page.

3.5. Translation Team

3.5.1 The Team

Year	Volunteers
2023	65
2022	86
2021	71
2020	53

The translation team currently has [**65**] volunteers, who translate 32 languages. The group is currently coordinated by corazondeviaje, sammiekong and pauloaguia.

There has been another influx of new requests to join the Translation Team after the newsletter, but hardly any user who clicked the join button fulfilled the translations team rules and/or didn't even respond after the initial contact by one of the team's coordinators. Many of these applicants seemed to have confused the group for something else – the description of the group has been further improved, but there are waves happening, and some people who click to join seem to still mistake the group's purpose.

In December 2022/ January 2023 the cleanup was completed – around 40 members were removed (and their translations rights were removed too), since then some new volunteers joined and there are now 65 members in the group.

Of the [65] members who currently have translation rights, 9 have rights to translate/edit in any language (group admins, developers, testing, etc) and 9 others have the rights to translate more than one language (but not all).

The team's main form of communication is through the dedicated group in BeWelcome. Messages posted there include requests for new translations, requests from the volunteers for help using the translation tools or for proofreading, as well as internal announcements. Several members respond quickly and overall, there is a nice working spirit. Some languages (at least Dutch, French, German, Greek, Russian, Chinese, Spanish) also have a dedicated work group for the translators of that language to communicate among themselves – these are public groups, managed independently from the main team's group, but many of these groups seem to be inactive, though.

3.5.2 Languages

BeWelcome is publicly available in 40 languages, with different levels of completeness (see table below). 4 other languages are also open for translation but not yet publicly released: Armenian, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Vietnamese (these are available only on https://beta.bewelcome.com).

Apart from English, which is the website's original language, seven other languages have already been almost fully translated – there was an update of the statistics database and some new wordcodes, so no other language is at 100% now other than English (French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Polish, Greek and Netherlands) and three others are close to have been done so (Galego, German are around 95% and Catalan is close to 80%).

About half of the 44 languages have had some translation activity in 2023, but several others seem to have been abandoned: Czech, Hindi, Lithuanian, Serbian, Slovakian, Vietnamese (no translation activity since 2021), Basque, Bulgarian, Farsi, Japanese, Norwegian Bokmål, Romansch, Slovenian, Sundanese, Swahili, Turkish (since 2020), Arabic, Latvian, Norwegian Norsk, Romanian (since 2019).

Language	Transl. Ratio	Volunteers*	Language	Transl. Ratio	Volunteers*
English(en)	100%	[6]	Chinese(simplified)(zh-hans)	38.19%	
French (fr)	99.77%	[5]	Portuguese(br) (pt-br)	35.80%	[1]
Italian(it)	99.82%	[4]	Arabic (ar)	35.78%	[1]
Portuguese(pt)	99.93%	[2]	Slovakian (sk)	30.80%	[1]
Spanish(es)	99.95%	[5]	Basque(eu)	29.05%	
Dutch (nl)	99.95%	[2]	Indonesian(id)	28.98%	
Polish (pl)	99.30%	[2]	Farsi (fa)	27.46%	[1]
German (de)	94.52%	[10]	Hebrew (he) NEW	25.76%	[2]
Greek (el)	99.14%	[2]	Latvian (lv)	24.76%	
Galician(gl)	95.14%	[1]	Romanian(ro)	22.94%	
Catalan(ca)	79.95%	[1]	Japanese(ja)	22.80%	
Russian(ru)	73.83%	[1]	Bulgarian (bg)	21.48%	
Serbian(sr)	67.74%		Armenian (hy) NEW	19.14%	[1]
Czech (cs)	64.11%	[1]	Slovenian (sl)	17.39%	
Lithuanian(lt)	57.63%	[1]	Hindi(hi)	16.32%	
Hungarian(hu)	50.85%	[1]	Vietnamese (vi) NEW	15.44%	[1]
Croatian (hr)	47.06%		Swahili(sw)	13.14%	
Chinese(traditional) (zh-hant)	48.76%	[1]	Norwegian Norsk (no)	10.57%	
Esperanto (eo)	42.19%	[2]	Ukrainian (uk) NEW	4.59%	[1]
Turkish(tr)	44.83%	[2]	Romansch (rm)	4.16%	
Finnish(fi)	39.33%		Norwegian Bokmål(nb)	0.05%	
Danish(da)	40.55%	[2]	Sundanese(su)	0.02%	

* does not include the 9 members with full translation rights

3.5.3 Activity

Since last year's GA, there have been some new strings (update of the Terms of Use among others) and the occasional broadcast message (like newsletters or login reminder). These broadcast messages are usually translated into about 10 languages (give or take a couple).

Due to some reports of strings that were changed in English but not updated in many languages there was a debate about whether or not these strings should be reverted back to English when changed. Opinions differed on what constituted a "major change" that should cause this (and when or not to use flag a changed string with that option) so, to play it safe, strings to be updated now display minor changes as well.

The development team has also improved the mock-up pages - translators can now review translations that don't appear on the website like newsletters, exported data, emails, error messages, etc. This feature had been released the previous year, but it still had several limitations, most of which have been eliminated now.

A new rich text editor was also introduced by the development team to allow for easier editing of formatted text, but this was received with mixed feelings by the translators, some of whom still struggle to use it properly, despite the manual that the translation team has provided to help clarify some of these questions.

3.5.4 Wish list for next year(s)

- Possibility to search by word used in the text (both in the original and in the translated language) – currently we can only search by translation id. This is very important to help keep the translations consistent. The team hoped this would be easy to implement but despite several requests it still hasn't happened.

- A link to the page(s) where the code can be found (listed for 3 years). When translating from the translation tools pages (as opposed to translating directly from the target page) more context is sometimes required. Note: This might also help identify translations that are no longer used by the website.

- A glossary (Listed for 5 years). Having translation suggestions for words used often throughout the website (like host, trips, profile, etc). It should naturally be up to each translator to define those but having them highlighted in the text when they're used or even displaying the relevant suggestions when translating requires further development.

- Creating guidelines for specific languages would improve the coherence of the communication we create. Not only for vocabulary (glossary) but also form (i.e. formal or informal speech? How to deal with masculine/feminine forms in the languages that distinguish between them? Etc.) These guidelines could then be handed over to new volunteers to maintain translations consistent but prove useful even when there is only one volunteer translating a language. The team will discuss internally how to implement this (maybe language specific wiki pages)

- Difference from previous version on updates (Listed for 5 years). When small changes are made to very big texts it's not always easy to pinpoint the changes and the translators must review the whole text again.

- Automatic notification about new translations added / updated (limited to once per day or until the translator logs in again). This might help bring back some inactive translators or help translators for languages that have been fully translated (listed for 3 years)

- See how much each member with translation rights has translated and over what period. (Listed for 5 years). Since this was first requested the development team introduced an improvement to see when and by whom was a string / language last translated but this still does not provide an easy overview of a translator's overall activity.

- Have some sort of online team activity for the translators to know each other or share experiences. The translator team has many volunteers scattered throughout the world so this poses several challenges, but hopefully this will happen within the next year.

3.6. Safety Team and spam checkers

The Spam Checkers consists of 9 volunteers who check the daily signups, the forum and activities for spammers. Currently 3 spam checkers take on the largest part of the work. Although there are no statistics on the number of banned spammers, we have noted that there is a shift from the usual Code 419 spam (large amounts of money "donated" by lawyers) to commercial spam.

The Safety Team consists of 6 volunteers with diverse degrees of activity. This year, for the first time in about five years, we had to deal with serious crimes in addition to reported spam messages and messages which members found disrespectful and reported, and with commercial and dating profiles reported to them with the "report profile" button.

Between January and May, a female user created 6 fake profiles and, before we could ban them, scammed and/or stole from 4 BeWelcome hosts in Paris and 1 in Mauritius, mostly money but also other items. She also managed to go out for dinner and to have her host pay for her. The Safety Team warned members in the Paris area, helped the victims to file police complaints, gathered information and coordinated with police and with the main hospitality exchange platforms since she had previously been banned from CouchSurfing and moved on to Trustroots and Couchers. The efforts did not lead to her being apprehended but fortunately the abuse has stopped.

After the removal of 7 sex-centered groups and the amendment to the terms of use to fight imposed bed-sharing we had several profiles removed which violated the terms of use, others modified. We had several complaints about sexual abuse and attempted sexual abuse by hosts, both on female and on male guests, and disputes about negative profile comments. Recently we saw a new phenomenon on BeWelcome: spy cams reported in a bathroom and in a bedroom, one with a police complaint. Fortunately there have not been any reported cases involving violence.

Some key statistics for the 12-month period up to October 14:
- The number of profile comments written over the period has increased by 28% to 8.540 from 6.682 the previous year. 117 of these comments or 1,4% were negative (vs. 1.5% the previous year).
- The team handled 1.350 OTRS safety or dispute related tickets.

There is still a large number of problems with messages reported using the "Report profile" link instead of reporting the messages themselves, resulting in significant additional work for the team. The improvements made to the reporting system in October 2022 have unfortunately not reduced this extra work. The instructions for reporting messages and not the profile when the problem is with the messages must be made even clearer.

The number of inappropriate messages reported with the link on the messages was 1.196 (+70%). These were mainly dating spam, commercial spam/scam, and disrespectful messages between prospective guests and hosts. The figure also includes messages within conversations which themselves were not abusive but reported along with others in the conversation. The total number of cases handled from OTRS tickets and these reports is at least 2.000.

3.7. Forum Moderation Team

Moderation Team was strained to keep up with the work this year. The amount of work has remained stable, but several members have had less time to spare for BeWelcome for personal reasons, and the team coordinator (mountx, who was a very active member) resigned. As a consequence, there often was a delay in moderation decisions. The reason for the team coordinator's resignation was a general disagreement with the way BeVolunteer is managed, including (but not limited to) moderation. Moderators are now looking for possible new candidates to approach.

The main outstanding issue for the mods continues to be the organization and display of BW groups. With the new members, there was an increase in demand for groups – both to set up new groups and to re-vitalise established groups. At present, however, most groups – including new groups – have no visibility and are difficult to find. The mods believe that some relatively simple changes could begin to address this and that, without some changes, members' enthusiasm is being wasted.

The 2022 GA's decision to remove a few sex-related groups, which was implemented by moderators, was mostly successful. A few of the concerned members raised protests, some of them legitimate (from members who were not misusing the groups). However, the majority of BW members looked to be indifferent (and some also voiced their support to the move).

The number of (obvious or suspected) sexual offers on the forum has decreased since deletion of the groups. Some suspicious offers are still posted in a few other groups, but there was no massive increase as could be feared. So the overall visibility of such posts has been significantly reduced. The benefit in terms of reputation and safety (BW not being associated with sex dating) looks far greater than any possible drawback (BW being accused of discrimination) that the short-lived protests may have triggered.

3.8. Support Team

Current active members of Support Team volunteers: 6

2 new volunteers joined the team in 2022-2023, and 2 members resigned because of not having enough time to be active in the team. The former team coordinator (amnesiac84) also stopped actively working on user requests, but remains in the team as OTRS admin.

There has been no progress about the change of tool for Support (switching from OTRS to Zammad or OTOBO), because sysadmins were not available to take care of it (their priority being the server migration).

What goes well

- all requests are generally answered in a reasonable time (a few days at most).
- new members in the team made up for the ones leaving.
- team procedures are helpful in the training of new members.

Difficulties

- the job is still quite solitary, as each member handles requests alone in most cases.
- all newsletters still produce a lot of bounces to be handled manually.
- a few more volunteers would be beneficial, especially for some languages (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Turkish).

3.9. New Member BeWelcome Team

There are currently 15 members in the team, but only 2 or 3 team members are still greeting. The main reason is the lack of feedback from the greeted members. Two years ago it was decided at the GA to install an automatic greeting, in the form of a short message in the first welcoming mail that new signups receive. This has not yet been implemented but we hope to start working on that

3.10. Status Report Ombudsman

The Ombudsman elected by the 2022 GA resigned during the year, because of feeling that the Ombudsperson's position was not made visible enough to members. The previous Ombudsman agreed to take up the job again and was appointed by the BoD.

No case was brought to the Ombudsman this year.

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