

BeVolunteer Annual Report 2023-2024



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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 2023-2024 term were as follows:

- Development was started for an improved sign-up process that will make it easier to create an account (2 steps instead of 5 now). However, at the time of writing this report it is not yet finalised.
- Some improvements were brought to the site:
 - Comment reminders were implemented: after a hosting experience, hosts and guests receive a notification asking them to leave a profile comment. This feature had been requested at the last General Assembly.
 - An option to block contact from empty profiles (without presentation or profile picture) was added. This feature had been requested at the last General Assembly, and was one of the things our members asked for in the survey.
 - The photo upload process was improved, with more formats and bigger sizes now accepted.
 - A quick way to delete a profile without prior login was implemented. This was done because of Google's requirements: when the delete profile page first required to log in, their bot didn't find the page and concluded we didn't have an option to delete a profile. So they threatened to suspend our app from the Play Store because that was against GDPR.
- A new cleanup of inactive members (who didn't log in after 5 reminders) is planned, in a continued effort to keep an active member base and display realistic statistics. At the time of writing this report, it is scheduled to be done in November.
- 1 newsletter and 4 community news were published. The target to publish more newsletters wasn't achieved.
- A presentation of BeWelcome was done at the "Journées du Logiciel Libre" (Free Software Days) event in Lyon, France. And BeWelcome was featured on the JdLL's site as an option to find accommodation. However, very few people attended the presentation. Visitors at the JdLL are probably more interested in technical topics.
- BeWelcome was the target of a serious spam attack: a single spammer (possibly using automated tools) created dozens of accounts and sent phishing messages to thousands of members through friend requests, messages and hosting requests. This forced us to suspend the "family and friends" feature, and to implement new measures against spam.

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. On 30/10/2023, right after the 2023 cleanup of inactive accounts, BeWelcome had 201.675 members. On October 30th, 2024, there were roughly 236.000 members.

This is a net increase of roughly 35.000 members compared to last year, but the yearly cleanup remains to be done so about 10.000 inactive members should be suspended. This is a lower growth rate than in previous years, which can be attributed to the end of a significant influx from Couchsurfing.com.

During the period since the last GA, 3 members signed an NDA (nondisclosure agreement) as part of active volunteering for BeWelcome in the Sysadmins team.

Activity of the members (compiled on October 20th, 2024 for the GA 2024, using BW statistics (<https://www.bewelcome.org/about/stats>):

During the last 4 weeks only 5,6% of members did log in (13085 members). 69% of members did NOT log in during the last 12 months. The percentage of members with a recent login is nearly stable, but the percentage of members without login for more than a year has increased. This is probably due to the big growth

BeWelcome experienced in the last 2 years: some of these new members weren't really interested (a lot of these new profiles stayed empty) and they stopped being active.

Same statistics for the last years:

Oct 24: 5,6% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 69% did not log in during the last 12 months

Oct 23: 5,6% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 66% did not log in during the last 12 months

Oct 22: 5,8% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 61% did not log in during the last 12 months

Nov 21: 5,2% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 70% did not log in during the last 12 months

Nov 20: 2,5% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 79% did not log in during the last 12 months

Nov 19: 2,2% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 86% did not log in during the last 12 months

Nov 18: 4% logged in during the last 4 weeks, 85% did not log in during the last 12 months

Nov 17: 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):

2024 : 8867 accepted requests, 2851 trips created, 49 accepted invitations, 256 activities created

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

There is a decrease in accepted requests, which means a decrease in global site activity.

Public trips still largely fail to be converted into hosting experiences (accepted invitations). This is not surprising as long as notifications are not in place.

The drop in activities number reflects the lack of promotion of activities on BeWelcome and lack of attendance, which can be discouraging for activity organisers.

1.3 BeVolunteer organisation

1.3.1 Board of Directors

- The 2023-2024 BoD was made up of 4 members. The BoD has not done much more than take care of daily business and administrative tasks.
- 2 of the BoD members were new, and one of them lives in a different time zone. As a consequence, communication and sharing of responsibilities within the BoD were not always easy.
- 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 (about once a month).
- The BoD tried to organise a BeWelcome stand at a summer festival in Germany but, lacking any response from local members, it was finally cancelled.
- The BoD claimed ownership of the BeWelcome brand on TrustPilot, and shared the account with the Communications Team in order to be able to answer user reviews.
- In 2023 the BoD had filed a request to the French administration to be recognized as a “general interest association”, which would have enabled donations from France to be tax-deductible. We asked for this recognition on the grounds of having a cultural purpose, which is an accepted criterion to be eligible. In November 2023, the administration answered negatively on the basis of their internal rules stating that a “cultural purpose” means supporting art. This is a very restricted definition which could probably be legally challenged. But the BoD decided not to fight against it, considering the resources a legal fight would involve and the relatively small benefit this recognition would bring.
- Volunteer resources: as before, the lack of active developers and sysadmins has been the major issue. Forum Moderation team is also still seriously understaffed, and spam checkers have been strained by a massive spamming attack and the additional screening enforced thereafter. Activity is also low in the Communications Team, with only 1 newsletter issued this year.

- We are still not able to take care of server issues in a suitable way. A server breakdown caused inconvenience for several months, migration of the old server is still not done, and Nextcloud is still not working properly... The sysadmins team got reinforced during the year, which will hopefully lead to improvements next year.
- The BoD started a new donation campaign in December 2023. See Financial report for more detailed information.
- The BoD will make a proposal for the new budget (2024-2025). More details can be found in the section about Financial Statement and Budget.
- The BoD also took charge of organising the 2024 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 45 members, 27 of which are eligible to vote.

No new members joined BV this year. 1 membership was cancelled by the BoD, according to the Statutes (not joining the vote for 2 years in a row). 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 2024	45	27	currently 1
GA2023	46	29	4
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

1.1. Financial Report

The financial year of BeVolunteer was from October 1st, 2023 until September 30th, 2024. The full financial report with incomes and expenses can be found in a separate document.

The donation campaign was started in November 2023. The donation goal of € 3050 was not reached by the end of September 2024 and at the closing of the financial year (30/09/2024) we had received 2743,18 euro, which is approximately 90% of our goal. Reason for not reaching our goal after 10 months was mainly due to the lack of large donations. Although the Spring newsletter (March 2024) triggered several smaller donations, it was not as successful as previous years. We received a total of 97 donations, the average amount donated is about €31, as compared to the usual average of €25. Most donations came from Germany, followed by Italy and France.

The donation option that was introduced last term (HelloAsso), yielded 15 donations (compared to 2 last term).

Server costs were still higher than 2 years ago due to the need for an extra server for the ongoing replacement of OTRS and the Production server.

At the end of the term, we had a net loss of €47,06. This was mainly because we did not reach our donation goal, and the ongoing increased server costs.

At the end of the term, we had €11.127,12 of which €2.000 is still assigned as an emergency fund.

2.2. Budget 2023-2024

Details of the budget proposal are in a separate document.

We currently have more than € 11.125 in our bank account, of which more than € 9.125 is readily available.

At the GA the BV members will have the opportunity to discuss and adapt the current proposal. The BoD suggests putting the donations' goal at €3445 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

3 new volunteers joined the sysadmin team this year, and 3 former volunteers became somewhat active again. Most of the work is still done by a single volunteer (Blackfalconx), who is also introducing the new volunteers to our system.

Some video team meetings were organised this year: they were useful to discuss the work being done and to assign tasks to each team member, but it was difficult to achieve attendance from all team members.

At the beginning of the year, updates to the system led to a general bug of the server where all utilities (NextCloud, Wordpress, Mattermost, BV mail server...) are set up. No data was lost, but functionality was affected: Nextcloud was unavailable for a short time, the OnlyOffice plugin which had just been fixed was broken again (and still is), and the BV email addresses stopped working for several months.

To avoid this situation in the future, sysadmins are working on the automation of server deployment, to be able to set up a staging server on demand to test changes before applying them to production servers. Sysadmins are now also better at documenting the work being done, because lack of documentation is the biggest issue when working on the old servers. This is groundwork that will be helpful for the migration of production servers, but meanwhile the migration itself wasn't started. A plan has been established but more help would be needed to execute it within the next 12 months. Sysadmins versed in Platform/SRE/DevOps Engineering are especially needed.

Blackfalconx has successfully applied to a Gitlab for non-profits account for BeWelcome, giving access to additional project management tools for the team. However, since the code is currently split between Gitlab and Github, it is presently considered to move all of it to a single platform.

3.3. Development Team

BW only has 1 active developer, working intermittently. The workload is always high, especially now that there is no more dedicated Design Team. As a consequence, emergencies are dealt with but there is little progress on new development. For several years we have not been able to find new developers willing to get involved for a long-term commitment. One new volunteer took contact this year but didn't follow up.

3.4. Communication Team

3.4.1 Membership

Month	members
November 2021	26 members
September 2022	41 members
September 2023	32 members
September 2024	33 members

During summer 2024, subculture 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 the bandwidth to take a lead and motivate or assign tasks to volunteers. When volunteers are pinged directly, the response is somewhat motivated. When volunteers want to help with social media, there is a challenge to allow them to moderate from the existing admins. More trust and experimentation is recommended to determine communication strategy and success.

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 communication apart from profiles in social media such as Facebook and Instagram. The primary means of internal communication is through the newsletter and community news.

Due to the lack of committed volunteers and content there was one newsletter in 2024.

Newsletters sent:

Year	Newsletters sent	Year	Newsletters sent
2023-2024	1	2019-2020	1
2022-2023	2	2018-2019	0
2021-2022	3	2017-2018	1
2020-2021	3	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	Year	stories
2023 – 2024	6	2018 - 2019	8
2022 - 2023	8	2017 - 2018	24
2021 - 2022	8	2016 - 2017	22
2020 - 2021	9	2015 - 2016	8
2019 - 2020	11		

The idea was to create at least one story with pictures per month and the content should 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 Instagram.

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/bewelcome.org>

Likes to the Facebook group:

year	likes	year	likes
2013	1,777	2019	6,171
2014	2,600	2020	6,700
2015	3,576	2021	7,357
2016	4,225	2022	7,500
2017	4,751	2023	7,700
2018	6,050	2024	7709

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.

Year	Members	Year	Members
2021	3296	2015	2000
2022	3900	2018	1937
2023	4181	2019	1931
2024	4307	2020	2900

It is linked to the official BW page. Many organisations 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	Year	Followers
2013	450	2019	925
2014	535	2020	1026
2015	727	2021	1081
2016	805	2022	1118
2017	836	2023	1108
2018	850	2024	1113

There is less growth in Twitter/X followers in 2023-2024 and also less relevance. The question remains: what is the social benefit in putting effort into Twitter/X? In 2024 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. katharinegk is no longer admin of the X/Twitter page, after leaving the Communications Team in 2023 because of a moderation decision. Subaculture is the admin with plans to share with Saleme and have the credentials. Someone who really enjoys Twitter can contribute, but until there is a collective strategy in communications, will it be postponed for now.

• **Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/bewelcome>**

Duesseldorf was able to secure the formerly unused channel "@bewelcome" for us. So far she is the only volunteer to fill it with content (130 posts altogether, 51 posts from October 2023 to September 2024). The profile has more than 730 followers as of Oct 21st, 2024. Within 30 days from mid August to mid September more than 1.300 accounts have been reached. One online meeting of 4 members of the communication team took place where a member shared his experiences on how to improve followership.

There is a lack content and an engagement strategy. A communication strategy meeting, with collective agreement would help.

• **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 was submitted but again rejected. One suggestion was we follow the structure of the couchsurfing page, so the moderators have no reasons for deleting it. They tried to add as many different and also scientific sources as possible. Reasons for rejection were "marketing speech" and "lack of significant references".

You can see here the reason for rejection. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Draft:BeWelcome>.

Leonidasz thinks to make an appeal. But we can discuss it. How should we react as an organisation.

The French wikipedia article has also issues with irrelevance. In August 2024 it was voted by 1 vote for that BeWelcome has relevance.

The page exists in 16 other languages other than English. Other hospex networks such as Trustroots and Couchers also have no article on Wikipedia, but Couchsurfing, Warm Showers and former Hospitality Club are present.

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 organise 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 a member of the Communications Team. The Communication Team currently 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 the 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 nonprofits. After the 2016 General Assembly BeWelcome joined the Google for nonprofits program. In 2022-2023, we have sought to maximise the spend by introducing worldwide campaigns. While searches based on derivatives of couchsurfing still get most traction ("couchsurfers, couchsurfing app etc), there has been an increase in those specifically searching for BeWelcome.

We spend the maximum (approx \$329 per day). Between January 1 2024- October 23 2024, we had a CTR of 17.78% which is excellent. There were 436,000 ad impressions and 77,000 clicks on ads (cost \$85,000). We did a clean up of the keywords in 2024 to remove (adding them as a negative keyword) any association with dating, sex etc. We also added keywords such as couchsurfing alternative.

The main keywords in this period were still related to couchsurfing e.g. couch surfing" (Clicks: 11,064), and phrases such as "meet people around the world" (Clicks: 7,900), and "meet locals" (Clicks: 4,299).

Bewelcome and similar phrases e.g. "be welcome" have increasing relevance as keywords. However, without an analytics tool, we don't know how many of these 77,000 clicks led to sign ups.

3.4.8 Analytics

We have only had 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 continues 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

No press information was sent out in 2024.

3.4.11 Media Outreach

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

3.4.12 Medium.com Stories

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 2024:

1. <https://bewelcome.medium.com/bewelcome-org-a-pure-hospitality-exchange-for-travelers-and-budget-conscious-globetrotters-7704651e0c73>
2. <https://bewelcome.medium.com/bewelcome-newsletter-happy-new-year-2024-a18223937c1c>

3.5. Translation Team

3.5.1 The Team

Year	Vols
2024	71
2023	65
2022	86
2021	71
2020	53

The translation team currently has [71] volunteers. The group is currently coordinated by corazondeviaje, sammiekong and pauloaguia.

There is a usual influx of new requests to join the Translation Team after a newsletter, but hardly any user who clicks the join button fulfils 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 group purpose.

No cleanup has been conducted in the 2023/24 term.

Of the [71] members who currently have translation rights, 9 have rights to translate/edit in any language (group admins, developers, testing, etc) and 8 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, 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.

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 word codes, 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 is around 95%, German 92% and Catalan is close to 80%).

Most languages saw a minor drop in translation percentage in the last year (likely due to some old codes being archived/ new word codes added). Less than half of the 44 languages (17) have had some translation activity in 2024, but several others seem to have been abandoned: Czech, Hindi, Lithuanian, Serbian, Slovakian, Vietnamese (no translation activity since 2021), Basque, Farsi, Japanese, Norwegian Bokmål, Romansch, Slovenian, Sundanese, Swahili (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)	37.16%	
Italian (it)	99.80%	[4]	Portuguese (br) (pt-br)	35.19%	[1]
Greek (el)	99.69%	[2]	Arabic (ar)	35.08%	[1]
Dutch (nl)	99.18%	[3]	Romanian (ro)	30.56%	[1]
Spanish (es)	99.05%	[5]	Slovakian (sk)	30.22%	[1]
French (fr)	99.05%	[5]	Basque (eu)	28.52%	
Portuguese (pt)	98.38%	[2]	Indonesian (id)	28.36%	
Polish (pl)	97.94%	[2]	Farsi (fa)	26.94%	[1]
Galician (gl)	95.24%	[1]	Hebrew (he) ^{NEW}	25.24%	[2]
German (de)	92.78%	[8]	Latvian (lv)	24.33%	
Catalan (ca)	79.92%	[2]	Japanese (ja)	22.29%	
Russian (ru)	72.72%	[1]	Bulgarian (bg)	21.12%	
Serbian (sr)	66.43%		Armenian (hy) ^{NEW}	18.83%	[1]
Czech (cs)	62.86%	[2]	Slovenian (sl)	16.97%	
Lithuanian (lt)	56.55%	[1]	Hindi (hi)	15.91%	
Chinese (traditional) (zh-hant)	50.25%	[1]	Vietnamese (vi) ^{NEW}	15.09%	[1]
Hungarian (hu)	49.92%	[1]	Swahili (sw)	12.96%	
Croatian (hr)	46.22%		Norwegian Norsk (no)	10.48%	
Turkish (tr)	44.89%	[2]	Ukrainian (uk) ^{NEW}	4.48%	[1]
Esperanto (eo)	42.77%	[2]	Romansch (rm)	4.19%	
Danish (da)	42.48%	[3]	Norwegian Bokmål (nb)	0.04%	
Finnish (fi)	38.62%		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).

3.5.4 Wish list for next year(s)

- 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) – recently worked around by posting by one of coordinators/ BoD or another team member if there are some new important word-codes that need translation – still quite a few team members must have notifications turned off.
- 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 – this is on the group coordinators to manage :-)

3.6.Safety Team and spam checkers

The **Spam Checkers Team** consists of 9 volunteers of whom 4 actively check signups, the forum and activities for spammers.

The **Safety Team** consists of 6 volunteers with diverse levels of activity.

Like the previous year, the number of reported inappropriate and spam messages increased by 70%, from 1.196 to 2.028. These were commercial, dating spam and other inappropriate messages which members reported with the reporting button on the messages or on the email notifications.

Some particularly active spammers and scammers creating dozens of fake profiles and sending hundreds of spam messages within less than an hour forced us to temporarily lower the message limit and to strengthen spam filtering with the much appreciated help of the developer. The added protection has so far been working very well. 2.960 spam messages have been blocked automatically since September 15, 2024. But at the moment false positives (blocked legitimate messages) must still be released manually every day until the filtering algorithm can be refined.

There are 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.

We again had several hidden spy camera complaints.

The serial thief and scammer in the Paris area who the previous year had created 6 fake profiles and, before we could ban them, scammed and/or stole from 4 BeWelcome hosts in Paris and 1 in Mauritius, moved on to other websites including Facebook after we warned members in the Paris area. We received one additional theft report involving this individual which was added to the file of the police investigator who has since been appointed and who knows her identity.

After the removal of 7 sex-centred groups and the amendment to the terms of use in 2023 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.

Some key statistics for the 12-month period up to mid-October:

The number of profile comments written over the period has increased by 19% to 10.130 from 8.540 the previous year. 144 of these comments or 1.4% were negative (percentage stable over the past two years).

In addition to reported messages, the team handled 1.600 OTRS safety or dispute related ticket notifications (+19% vs. 1.350 the previous year), for a total of approximately 3.600 cases. All of this represents a very significant work-load which could not be handled without the dedication of our most active volunteer. With the continuous growth of BeWelcome, the Safety Team will need additional active volunteers.

3.7. Forum Moderation Team

The Moderation Team is still understaffed, with most members having little time to spare for it. As a consequence decisions have often been slow, and made without feedback from the whole team (often with only 2 moderators out of 4 giving their opinion). There has also often been some delay in the detection and deletion of spam posts.

Having discussions within the team about broader topics like moderation policy, forum rules or deletion of groups (as opposed to individual cases) proves difficult because of low activity. So no action other than daily business (checking spamming and dealing with reports) has been undertaken by the team.

We are expecting a new member (Jurek) to join the team by the end of the year, which will improve the situation. One or 2 additional members would be helpful, but other possible candidates declined to join and finding suitable profiles is not easy.

The amount of forum spamming has remained stable, and there has been no serious case of forum misuse this year (only deletion or editing of individual posts, but no sustained arguments between members or massive spam attack).

The main outstanding issue for the mods continues to be the organisation and display of BW groups. Most groups – including new ones – 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.

A cleanup of duplicate and inactive groups would also be needed, as well as some deeper changes to the way forum and groups work. But with the current lack of volunteers, mods can't take care of the cleanup. And if other structural changes aren't implemented, the cleanup itself will not help much.

3.8. Activity Moderators Team

There are still not many activities published by BW members. Activity moderation isn't a lot of work, it mainly means checking the activities regularly. Only a few spam activities, or otherwise inappropriate ones (like hosting offers), were deleted. On the other hand, only 1 volunteer is really active. BeWelcome is not promoting activities efficiently, which doesn't help staying motivated to dedicate time for this section of the site.

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.

3.9. Support Team

Current active members of Support Team volunteers: 4

1 member resigned from the team because of not having enough time, and another member is not active at the moment. The former team coordinator (amnesiac84) also stopped actively working on user requests, but remains in the team as OTRS admin.

Despite a reduced team, remaining members are the most active ones so the team's responsiveness has remained good. However, new members would be useful to make up for the lost ones. A few applicants contacted the team, but none of them was serious: they either didn't fit the requirements (new members with no experience of BeWelcome) or stopped answering after the first message.

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.

What goes well

- all requests are generally answered in a reasonable time (a few days at most).
- team procedures are helpful as a knowledge base.
- there is discussion in the team about difficult or unusual cases.

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).

3.10. 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.

At last year's GA it was decided 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

3.11. Status Report Ombudsman

The Ombudsman elected by the 2023 GA did not receive any cases to mediate. He has agreed to be candidate again this year.

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