

General Assembly of BeVolunteer 2024

9th and 10th of November 2024 in person in Bern, Switzerland, and online

Moderator: gbenouville

Minutes: thorgal67

Attendees:

11 Voting members + 1 Guest

Present live: chagai95, thorgal67, wind, duesseldorf, Marstr, gbenouville, corazondeviaje (Sunday), Alex_W (guest, Sunday), Popeye33 (guest, Sunday)

Present online: Polyglot, saleme, leonidasz, corazondeviaje (Saturday)

====SATURDAY 9th November 2024====

Each discussion should already create a precise wording for the votings later on!

09:00 - 09:30 - Meeting of participants

09:30 - 09:40 - Official Welcome

gbenouville welcomes the people online

6 people present in Bern

Some other users will join us here tomorrow and also online.

Currently 15 people have joined the voting group. gbenouville will send a reminder

Online attendees: please raise your hand if you want to speak

09:40 - 11:00 - Financial Report + Budget + Annual Report

The BoD published the annual report one week ago, and the Financial & Budget report yesterday.

- Annual Report
- Financial Report
- Budget Proposal 2024-25

Annual report was reviewed.

The main points:

- improvements on BW website:
 - Comment reminders
- Polyglot adds that it did not seem to make a difference
- block contact from empty profiles
- photo upload process
- quick way to delete profiles (request of Google - GDPR)
- ongoing: improved sign-up process

Sysadmin team is active and working together, but there are still lots of things to do.

- 2 x server breakdown -> root caused not yet identified
- Nextcloud was unavailable for a longer time this year

- We wanted 2 newsletters, only managed 1

- BeWelcome was invited at the "Journées du Logiciel Libre" in Lyon / France => not very successful, most people are interested in technical topics.

- We were not able to attend an event in Stuttgart /Germany because we did not find any volunteers to help out and present BeWelcome there.

- BW got hit by a big spam attack which forced us to suspend the "family & friends" feature and implement new spam measures.

Polyglot adds that the features programmed by Shevek were really helpful.

Current number of BW members: 236.000

Growth rate is lower than in the previous years.

3 new volunteers who signed a NDA

Login statistics: 5,6% logged in during the last month - 69% did not log in during the last 12 months

Saleme asks, if inactive members get informed how to use the site better

gbenouville says that it would be more efficient to explain them better at sign-up

duesseldorf suggested to make a "how to use BW" video but cannot do this alone.

thorgal67 will help duesseldorf to create this.

Number of accepted requests is decreasing.

Polyglot raised the situation that the number of comments are also low, but still more than 50% of formal hosting.

Trips are also down, probably because nobody knows about

Solution: - make more publicity for our features

- have notifications

Saleme is happy to see that even though the numbers might be decreasing it is still positive that people are willing to use BW for this interaction.

Polyglot does not agree to make the hosting request feature faster (risk of more spamming/copy-paste requests).

BeVolunteer: no new members. Current: 45 members, 27 eligible to vote

Financial report/budget

90% of the target reached, probably due to only 1 newsletter.

No single big donation.

Server costs are still the highest expense, expected to be similar next year.

Successful year on the whole.

Proposal to have 500€ for promotion next year (either supporting an event, or buying commercial materials)

Proposal to set the target to the exact expenses.

Team reports:

gbenouville reviews the main points about every single team

Marstr gives an overview of communications.

X / Twitter: no decision yet what to do with it

2nd Instagram account has been hijacked, duesseldorf is trying to get it back.

Marstr: we need more content.

Wikipedia: articles are being deleted and rerouted to the "Hospitality exchange service" portal where only CS, TR, HC and WS have their own article.

Safety team is understaffed. New volunteers that meet all requirements are difficult to find

It would be good to have somebody on a different time zone.

Support team is a logical "pool" to find new Safety Team members

Moderation team: mostly one active moderator (out of 4), a second one will join soon

Activity Moderation team: not very active since there are not many activities

Support team: good place to train new volunteers

Still using OTRS, migration options to be investigated with the help of sysadmins

11:00 - 11:15 - Coffee break (or buffer time in case of delays)

11:15 - 12:15 - TOPIC 1: new logo

LINK : Group BV members | BeWelcome

https://www.bewelcome.org/group/94/forum/s30681-_GA_2024__TOPIC_1__logo_change

Very difficult to explain hospitality through a single picture.

Globe with 2 people is the best idea up to now.

Shape of the continents to be refined further.

What benefits do we expect of this change? What are the implications?

not only visual appeal, also does it better convey what we want people (who don't know about us) to understand

Icon on left or right side of the text, or in the O letter?

In the O reduces readability.

Should be consistent everywhere.

Is it possible to put a house in the logo? => does not look possible

Maybe globe in a house (with 2 persons included somewhere), but we don't have such a design yet.

The main discussion deals with the representation of our core purpose.

The shape of the continents is something that we can still discuss about later.

For brand name and recognition, better to use capital B and W and not separate them on 2 lines

Marstr: Lowercase B looking better.

Chagai: Other sites (TR, CS) have all in lowercase, should we do the same? Including capitals in the wordmark looks old-fashioned.

polyglot: Capital W helps readability and distinguishes the brand from the words "be

welcome"

Informal vote on preferences:

- BeWelcome

+2

- beWelcome

+6

- Bewelcome

+1

-BEWELCOME

0

Icon left or right of the wordmark? -> keep it on the left (as per all the current proposals)

Position of people on the icon: leaning left or leaning right?

Polyglot: people oriented to the right, towards "BeWelcome", consistent with reading habits in the West.

leaning left needs some rework and may not work (people standing in water if the Earth shape is kept as it is) -> keep them leaning right

Voting questions:

Should we change the BeWelcome and BeVolunteer logo ? Yes/no/I abstain

The new logo will be on the basis of this proposal:

<https://www.bewelcome.org/group/56/forum/s29247/#post144084>

We will not change the colors, the case (lowercase b and capital W), the one-line format, the icon on the left of the text. Some rework should be done on the shape of continents to get a final version.

12:15 - 13:30 - Lunch break

13:30 - 15:00 - TOPIC 2: BW tagline

[https://www.bewelcome.org/group/94/forum/s30015-](https://www.bewelcome.org/group/94/forum/s30015-_GA_2024__TOPIC_2__Change_of_the_BW_tagline__Join_the_largest_free_hospitality_community__)

[_GA_2024__TOPIC_2__Change_of_the_BW_tagline__Join_the_largest_free_hospitality_community__](https://www.bewelcome.org/group/94/forum/s30015-_GA_2024__TOPIC_2__Change_of_the_BW_tagline__Join_the_largest_free_hospitality_community__)

Couchsurfing and alternative are terms used by people who search on Google

Is "alternative" needed?

presently, Couchers appears with this search -> probably needed

If people search for "CS alternative", "couchsurfing" is included so it may be enough?

polyglot: The tagline is how we define ourselves, so defining ourselves only related to CS is a problem.

Tagline change is only needed in English (other languages not found by search engines).

The website is designed so that Google looks at the English version.

Also, for the benefit of search results it may not be needed to change in other places than the homepage (social media, etc).

polyglot: better to use the same everywhere for consistency

Thorgal67 : Since the 'hidden' metadata does not influence the visibility, we need to

include the important words in the tagline

Polyglot and Leonidasz object to the use of couchsurfing in the marketing (Google ads) campaign.

The choice of words in Google ads has not been publicly discussed.

This is a different topic, to be discussed after the GA.

gbenouville mentions that the google results are dependent on many different parameters. 2 people running the same search may not find the same results.

The BW ad appearing when searching "couchsurfing alternative" includes in the headline "make friends on BW": this is not according to the tagline and should be made consistent. No one at the GA knows for sure where this headline comes from. gbenouville says it may not depend on us: maybe an automatic summary of contents made up by Google? This headline was anyway not a decision from any team.

The current "subtitle" (i.e. the short text shown below the tagline on the homepage) includes "make new friends all over the world", but it's part of a full paragraph and not on its own as a headline.

The problem seems to be a lack of communication: not making it clear that the tagline has to be used in all kinds of communication, it has not been made consistent everywhere.

Use of "alternative" in the tagline has been discussed on the forum but no good-sounding tagline was found. It could be used in the subtitle instead. The subtitle is also taken into account by search engines.

Suggested tagline: "BeWelcome: the largest free couchsurfing community"

Subtitle: could include "An alternative way to travel" (to be discussed after the GA, no need of a GA vote)

Which tagline do you want to use on BeWelcome

2 options:

- 1) keep the current tagline : BeWelcome: the largest free hospitality community
- 2) change the tagline to BeWelcome: the largest free couchsurfing community.

Polyglot asks how to calculate the result of including certain words

Marstr: check the search results periodically (polyglot says this is complicated by seasonality)

On the Google AdWords console it's possible to see the most searched for keywords. No follow-up of it is implemented at the moment.

15:00 - 15:30 - Coffee break (or buffer time in case of delays)

15:30 - 16:30 - TOPIC 3: respective roles of GA and BoD

Organisation & Decision making of GA & BoD

https://www.bewelcome.org/group/94/forum/s30111-_GA_2024__TOPIC_3__BeVolunteer_statutes__BV_procedures

gbenouville's point of view is that we do not need a GA decision for every single action, and we only need it for the points specifically stated in the statutes.

Anything else can be discussed on the BV forum.

When something needs to be decided, it should be discussed in the forum and not wait till the next GA.

If there is a disagreement, this can then be taken to the GA for a vote.

Polyglot says that in that specific example (changing the tagline) it was overturning a GA decision outside of a GA.

A GA decision has to be respected until decided otherwise.

gbenouville: does this "otherwise" decision have to come from a GA? Why not use the common decision process based on forum discussion?

One of the issues was that the discussion was only in the communications team.

The BoD should have also brought it to BeVolunteer, because BV members are not necessarily members of a group. But in the other way, non-BV members who may be involved in the proposal can't take part in the BV group.

Gabriel gives some examples where a GA decision was implemented in a different way afterwards.

Wind gives the example where the BoD prepared an alternative way of dealing with a GA decision (Google adwords rejected by a GA: the next BoD doing all the preparatory work to implement it but not actually implementing it until a new GA decision).

Marstr's proposal: if in a team group a decision is made that contradicts a previous GA decision, it should be clearly communicated to the BV members to see if a new GA vote is necessary or if it can be overturned/adapted

A mailing to all BV members should be sent, if a GA decision is planned to be overturned. Should BV rules (not statutes) be modified to add this requirement? No need, just keep it in mind as good practise

Polyglot suggests to publish an agenda by the BoD.

gbenouville: it can be tried, but not easy because the BoD meetings' agenda is often decided last-minute

Wind suggests to invite/allow BV-members to join the BoD meetings OR to have monthly BV and/or regular BW meetings (suggested by Marstr)

16:30 - 17:00 - Who wants to be a candidate for the BoD? Explain the BoD job more in detail.

currently thorgal67 and Marstr have entered their candidacy

gbenouville sent a mail to encourage other BV members to run for BoD

====SUNDAY 10th November 2024====

09:30 - 10:30 - TOPIC 4: Spam issues

https://www.bewelcome.org/group/94/forum/s30378-_GA_2024__TOPIC_4__Spam_issue__brainstorming

Topic put on the agenda by gbenouville

We do not have any good tools to detect and prevent spam without manual intervention, and without disrespecting our members' privacy.

There was already a discussion on the forum, but it was a rather technical discussion.

Example: using the family & friends tool was problematic as there was no detection tool. Therefore we needed to disable the tool.

Shall we put it back in place but with safety tools, or shall we keep it disable.

Polyglot:

4 ways of getting spam:

- family & friends (disabled)
- messages
- comments
- requests

For safety reasons tools in place are not written down in this (public) report. If you need more info, you can contact somebody from the Safety Team.

Additional tool requested by polyglot: keywords to be flagged in messages to be held.

Filtering of IG/FB handles is giving work to spam checkers, with normal messages being held, it would be better if they were not included in the filter.

Some solutions were proposed on the forum but not implemented: discussion with shevek is needed to see what is blocking implementation.

Marcel: allowing IG handles can lead to people having an empty profile and just link to external social media. Should we allow that?

gbenouville: up to now we never worried about people sharing IG handles in messages, we didn't have a spam problem with that, so no reason to block them. We should only block spammers.

Do we also want to block phone numbers from first requests?

gbenouville: it's often given in last-minute requests, there are legitimate reasons.

polyglot: that kind of use (sending a last-minute request with a phone number) is unsafe, but can be used for legitimate reasons. Users don't realize they are taking a risk.

Duesseldorf: people use BW and other sites in many different ways, our view of how to use the tools is not shared by many younger members. Blocking messages has the problem, that if nobody is available in spam checking team, legitimate messages will not be delivered.

3 possibilities:

- hold the message,
- send the message but remove the phone number (but the spammer will see it in sent messages),

- block the message and inform the sender (but no good against spammers if they know).

gbenouville: if we give spam checkers extra rights, it would be easier to recruit those than find new members for the Safety Team.

Polyglot: suggestion to check certain keywords in either profile (while signing up) or in messages.

Need to make the suggestion not to send contact details more visible.

Informal vote: Shall we flag telephone numbers/large numbers in initial requests as potential spam:
+6

10:30 - 11:30 - TOPIC 5: funding of BW (possibilities for grants, how to increase donations...)

https://www.bewelcome.org/group/94/forum/s30682-_GA_2024__TOPIC_5__funding_of_BW

1. Donations

Forum: better communication, more newsletters (with right timing).

Should we send a specific newsletter to remind about donations (probably at the end of Summer, possibly one more during the year)?

Should it be sent only to newsletter subscribers or to everyone?

duesseldorf: we should be careful not to get our mails blacklisted for spam.

-> only subscribers as long as we're not too far from our target (otherwise, to be discussed).

Sending enough newsletters should be sufficient to reach the donations target.

Improve the visibility of the donation link.

Possibly post a call for donations on IG, but it should be with some graphics or a funny video.

polyglot: it could give a bad feedback to non-members seeing BW on IG, directly seeing a request for funding.

Marstr: put it on the Community news & IG and then link to that in the Newsletter
check if we can monitor the number of views of community news.

2. grants : EU funding not yet implemented.

Marstr: we could have projects for individual features to have parts of the site written in other languages than php and switch little by little. For example activities

We could ask for funding to pay for this.

Creating a work team is the first step:

- what do we want
- which software to use
- find the right people
- launch a funding application/get a quote from a company if needed
- testing
- public testing

There needs to be some leadership in this kind of project, if general questions are asked in

groups there is no answer.

11:30 - 11:45 - Coffee break (or buffer time in case of delays)

11:45 - 12:15 - Introduction of & Questions to BoD candidates / Ombudsperson

Pietsah agreed to remain Ombudsperson

thorgal67 would like to remain treasurer, can also possibly be secretary.

gbenouville is willing to put his candidacy to help the BoD out, but not as president.

12:15 - 13:30 - Lunch break

13:30- 14:30 - TOPIC 6: How to increase volunteering

https://www.bewelcome.org/group/94/forum/s30683-_GA_2024__Topic_6__how_to_increase_volunteering

For many years BW has been struggling to get new volunteers and retain old ones.
All volunteer-based organisations have this kind of issues.

Change of context: volunteering is down in younger generations.

The idea of hospitality is not new anymore with AirBnB and such appearing.

Times have changed: younger people want fast results.

Support Team has a reasonably good drive because there is always work to do.

You need to keep people interested.

Most people don't check or receive forum notifications, so if there are only occasional discussions or tasks in the team they just drop out and don't see what is going on.

Marstr: give precise small tasks with a clear deadline.

There is a big frustration if volunteers drop out after a short period or if they do not agree with the team rules.

Team spirit is the key.

Dedicated volunteers make a difference

marstr: we need 'camaraderie'

team leaders create a drive

duesseldorf suggests making short videos where the team coordinator says what the team does.

gebenouville suggests using a better communication tool within a team (not the forum)
have a Signal/Whatsapp group or such tools used by people nowadays, for each volunteering group.

Comparison between BW and TR: stronger legal structure in BW, which is good to ensure stability and prevent someone from grabbing power but makes it more difficult for anyone to start doing something compared to TR which is more a "do-ocracy"

Saleme: suggestion of having somebody welcoming new volunteers, tell them about the history of BeWelcome, give a short overview of required skills, how the department works,

etc...

gbenouville: this is the job of team coordinators

Duesseldorf: have a mattermost chat for volunteers which is visible on the website, easy to find

gbenouville: currently not possible to link the Mattermost account with BW, it needs some development. Mattermost is used very little.

chagai points to a company called Polychat.de who wants to install cross-messaging system. He suggests to contact them and offer BeWelcome as their pilot project. But bridging between different messaging systems is currently not working well.

14:30- 15:30 - Open discussion

Oded (IT and safety support Trustroots for 5 years) joined the GA as he is staying with Chagai at the moment.

Trustroots used Slack in the past

now 5-6 volunteers are left on Trustroot

TR moved to maintenance mode, not developing any more new features.

15:30 - 16:00 - Proposals to be voted upon - finalize wording

Vote 1:

Title: [GA2024-01] New BW Logo

Content:

At the 2024 GA we decided to put the new logo up for voting.

You can find the current logo (option 1) and the proposed logo (option 2) in the following thread: Group [GA 2024 - Official Voting Group] | BeWelcome

The new proposal has not been finalized yet. We will not change the colors, the case (lowercase b and capital W), the one-line format, the icon on the left of the text. Some rework should be done on the shape of continents to get a final version.

https://www.bewelcome.org/group/3279/forum/s30750-_GA2024____Vote__1____New_Logo

Question: Which of the following logos do you prefer?

Option 1: Keep the current logo [2 votes]

Option 2: Use the new proposed logo [10 votes]

Option 3: I abstain [5 votes]

Vote 2:

Title: [GA2024-02] BW Tagline

Read up on the discussion on the forum : https://bewelcome.org/group/94/forum/s30015-_GA_2024__TOPIC_2__Change_of_the_BW_tagline__Join_the_largest_free_hospitality_community__

Question:

Which tagline do you want to use for BeWelcome

3 options:

- 1) keep the current tagline: "BeWelcome: the largest free hospitality community" [6 votes]
- 2) change the tagline to: "BeWelcome: the largest free couchsurfing community" [7 votes]
- 3) I abstain [4 votes]

In the absence of an absolute majority, the General Assembly did not make a decision on this topic.

Vote 3:

Title: [GA2024-03] Annual Report 2023-2024

Content:

Please find the GA Annual Report 2023-2024 [HERE](#)

Question: Do you approve the Annual Report 2023-2024?

Option 1: YES [16 votes]

Option 2: NO [0 votes]

Option 3: I ABSTAIN [0 votes]

Vote 4:

Title: [GA2024-04] Financial Report 2023-2024

Content:

Please find the BV financial statement 2023-2024

Question: Do you approve the BV financial statement 2023-2024

Option 1: YES [17 votes]

Option 2: NO [0 votes]

Option 3: I ABSTAIN [0 votes]

Vote 5:

[GA2024 -05] Budget 2024-2025

Content:

Please find the BV Budget for 2024-2025 [HERE](#)

Question: Do you approve the BV budget for 2024-2025?

Option 1: YES [15 votes]

Option 2: NO [0 votes]

Option 3: I ABSTAIN [2 votes]

Vote 6:

[GA2024-06] Candidature of pietshah for ombudsperson

Content:

Question: Do you elect pietshah to the position of ombudsperson?

Option 1: YES [16 votes]

Option 2: NO [0 votes]

Option 3: I ABSTAIN [1 vote]

Vote 7:

[GA2024-07] Candidature of gbenouville for the BoD

Content:

Question: Do you elect gbenouville to the BoD?

Option 1: YES [16 votes]

Option 2: NO [0 votes]

Option 3: I ABSTAIN [1 vote]

Vote 8:

[GA2024-08] Candidature of marstr for the BoD

Content

Question: Do you elect marstr to the BoD?

Option 1: YES [16 votes]

Option 2: NO [0 votes]

Option 3: I ABSTAIN [1 vote]

Vote 9:

[GA2024-09] Candidature of thorgal67 to the BoD

Content

Question: Do you elect thorgal67 to the BoD?

Option 1: YES [17 votes]

Option 2: NO [0 votes]

Option 3: I ABSTAIN [0 votes]