To:

International Commissioners and other principal contacts of NSOs and NSAs in the European Region

16 April 2014   **Circular 16/2014**

Some background information on Scout.org website and WOSM communication

Dear Friends,

The European Scout Committee (ESC) recently requested from the Steering Committee of the World Scout Committee (WSC SC) some additional information related to the "new" scout.org website and to how WOSM is communicating. Many European NSOs have raised questions related to these matters prior to and following the circulation of the European Circular 6/2014 "WOSM Web presence".

The WSC Steering Committee answered immediately to the Chairperson of the ESC. For full transparency, clear communication and to enable our NSOs to make the best use of the scout.org website and to better understand how WOSM is communicating, the European Scout Committee wishes to inform all its NSOs in detail about these issues.

You will find an extract of the information we received below. You should note that we omitted some of the information received in this Circular because it is either related to commercial agreements with third parties or includes budgetary or personal details, which should not be disclosed in the public domain. However the Steering Committee of the World Scout Committee shared all this information with us in a detailed fashion and in full transparency but on a confidential basis.

1.   The framework of the new website

Background of the new website scout.org

As you may know the origin of what we today call the "new scout.org" started in 2011 with the development of the scoutmessenger.org site. This was an online platform created to achieve one of the key objectives of WOSM's flagship initiative, Messengers of Peace, which was to develop a global network of 20,000,000 young people where they can share their own projects and stories and also be inspired by other projects and ideas from Scouts across the world.

Initially, from the start in 2011 until the early part of 2013, the Joint Executive Decision Committee (JEC) for Messenger of Peace (MoP)[1] took the strategic decision to develop a separate website, which became known as scoutmessengers.org, to achieve the objective detailed above. The overall strategic decisions, including the selection of the supplier for scoutmessenger.org, were discussed and agreed by the JEC while operational management of the project was coordinated through the Global Projects Team in the World Scout Bureau.

After undertaking a review early in 2013 the (new) Secretary General decided to propose to the JEC a merger of scoutmessengers.org and scout.org into a new platform based on the following key elements

- A clear need to update the old scout.org website;

- A clear need for scoutmessengers.org to be more closely linked to scout.org to avoid confusion between the aim of both of the online communication platforms;

- A continuing request from NSOs (in particular from the European Scout Region) to make it clear that MoP is part of World Scouting and not a separate entity.

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[1]   The JEC is the decision-making committee established by a MoU between the World Scout Committee (WSC), World Scout Foundation (WSF) and the donor to govern the Messengers of Peace Fund. It is comprised of the Secretary General of WOSM, the Director of the WSF and a representative from the donor (Abdullah Al Fahad, also member of the WSC).

The JEC welcomed the proposal of the Secretary General and made sure that the total budget available for the development of the MoP Network would be available for what became known as "the merger" and later the "new scout.org". Full responsibility for the decision-making and management of the project also shifted to the World Scout Bureau under the authority of the Secretary General. The green light for the start of this merger project was given in March 2013, and kicked off on the operational level with a start-up meeting in Copenhagen with a global team of WSB staff.

Since the launch in October 2013 the WSB has received extensive and very constructive feedback from users, the WSC, the WSF, Regional Scout Committees and the Central and Regional Offices. As a result they have added or changed functionalities and created new features.

Selection of the service provider and WSC/WSF involvement

As already detailed, the new scout.org is a merger which has been built using content and functionality from two existing websites (scout.org and scoutmessenger.org) as well as adding new features. The selection of the service supplier dates back to 2011, when the JEC made an assessment of 3 possible options to realize the MoP Network: an in-house solution using the available expertise in the World scout Bureau (WSB), and 2 external suppliers – a local Geneva based agency and an international agency. After an in-house build was ruled out based on lack of knowhow and available human resources, the local supplier was awarded the contract. However, after a reasonable time frame the conclusion was reached in 2012 that the selected provider was not capable of managing a project of this size and the switch has been made to the international agency, which remains contracted until today.

2.   Focus of the new website on individual Scouts

Considerations to add a user-driven dimension to scout.org, in addition to corporate and institutional content

The core functionality of the new site, as discussed in Regional Workshops between June and August 2013, comprises 3 distinct functionalities:

- A user-driven website, which allows young people and leaders from across the world to share ideas and projects with each other, with the result that they are multiplied and the impact on local communities is increased;

- A corporate site ("About Scouting"), including a number of static pages with corporate information about World Scouting for the general public. You will note that in the governance pages (http://scout.org/wosm) there is a specific mention of the fact that WOSM is composed of National Scout Organizations as its members;

- An Intranet, developed for institutional WOSM communication to the official representatives of its members (NSOs) and its own bodies (Regions and World).

The WSC SC confirmed us that indeed a new dimension was added – user-driven content – to scout.org on top of a revamp of the existing corporate and institutional elements in the old scout.org. Looking at the Internet landscape of today, there is a very clear increased focus worldwide on the individual and their ability to share in an interactive way, as opposed to static one-way information websites. Apart from that, they underlined that the user-driven element is also enabling WOSM to achieve a unified approach between scoutmessenger.org and scout.org, so ensuring that one of the key objectives of the Messengers of Peace initiative of World Scouting was met.

scout.org enables individual Scouts to connect with each other

This new user-driven dimension of scout.org enables in the first place individual Scouts to connect with each other (as opposed to WOSM "targeting" individual Scouts directly) and through that they can be inspired by new ideas and projects to implement in their local communities. The WSC SC emphasized also that this concept has been thoroughly explained during the Regional Consultation Workshops in the development phase of scout.org and, as far as they are aware, received no negative reactions from these meetings.

The European Scout Committee asked in its letter to the WSC SC to clarify the formal basis for the new scout.org platform. The WSC SC refers to World Scout Conference resolutions, which in the past have urged the World Scout Committee and World Scout Bureau to increase the mutual exchange of information and good practices as well as youth involvement in our communications (e.g. 10/90, 7/11, 8/11, 14/11). Additionally, responding to our request for a formal basis, the WSC SC also refers to WOSM's Constitution, which defines the purpose of the Organization "to foster the Scout Movement throughout the world by (…) facilitating its expansion and development" (article IV.2). It also clearly states that the function of the World Scout Bureau is, inter alia, "to

provide the services necessary for the promotion of the Scout Movement throughout the world" as well as "to maintain relations with Member Organizations and to assist them in the development of Scouting" (article XIX b and c).

The WSC SC sees the new scout.org as an innovative approach, ahead of many other NGOs, which ensures that World Scouting fully takes advantage of digital engagement and collaboration in the 21st century to further increase its impact on local communities.

3.   The new website's institutional context

The Intranet functionality has been recently introduced in the new scout.org as a dedicated space for institutional WOSM communication to the official representatives of its members (NSOs) and its own bodies (Regions and World). WOSM feels this is the right place to put such institutional content for two reasons:

- It is kept together in one clean online space with easy navigation;
- It is kept separate from rest of the website which is open to the public (some institutional content may not be appropriate to be shared in the public domain where press, media and external partners have access).

The majority of such institutional content has already been moved to the Intranet under Services and Circulars. All Conference Resolutions have been moved under the heading of resolutions in the 'Services' area. A new section called 'Standing Orders' will help increase the question of transparency, which has been requested by NSOs. This area will bring together all decisions of the World Scout Committee in an easily searchable database, which will be indexed chronologically.

If any institutional content needs to be shared more widely with the public, the Communications Team will produce a communication piece on the subject (this could be in the form of a Circular or an announcement in the Intranet) but with suitable articulation and audio-visuals to enhance the reader experience in the public domain.

Recently a further optimized version of the front page went live which provides users with the opportunity to choose various front page flows including a stream of posts only containing institutional news, events, library items, etc.

4.   Control of irregular/inappropriate posting

The Communication Team has the following system set up on scout.org to manage inappropriate content:

1) Mollom (the same as used by Twitter), a third-party software for preventing spam, has been put in place. Mollom does the following three things:

   a. Deletes any spam posts published by robots and programmes;

   b. Deletes any content that contains nudity, blasphemy, violence and bad language;

   c. Identifies posts that seem to be dubious and sends an email to the administrator when such a post occurs.

2) Social reporting – a very powerful tool on a website like scout.org with new users signing up every day is to use the capacity of the users to identify inappropriate content. All content that can be published by users can be flagged as inappropriate, including the users themselves (based on what they say on their profile). An email indicating the flagging is immediately sent to a team of moderators.

3) A team of moderators has set up for scout.org from across all of the World Scout Bureau offices. This group works in a complementary way across different time zones so there is always at least one office or person actively monitoring the site and flagged content. The role of this team of moderators is to:

   a. Visit the website daily and identify any visibly inappropriate content;

   b. When responding to any content being marked as inappropriate, the moderator has the right to immediately delete the content;

   c. Write to users when their post has been unpublished for editorial reasons (cultural insensitivity, poor quality, etc.), unless the content is spamming, phishing or attempting to do other illicit activities on the web – in such cases the content is simply unpublished and the user blocked.

5.   World level strategy towards communications

The importance of a coherent and synchronised global communications strategy for WOSM is clearly understood and is high on the Secretary General's agenda. The search for a new Global Director, Communications and External Relations, is well underway but as you know the process has suffered some delays due to the relocation process and the departure of the previous Director of Communications. The Secretary General expects to have this final member of the Central Office Senior Management Team on board within the next couple of months.

In the meantime, major communications projects are steered by Christophe Lécureuil (an outside consultant) in close cooperation with the other Global Directors and the WSB Communications staff in the Central and Regional Offices. A global WSB communication meeting was held at the end of March in Kandersteg to work further on a holistic approach for communications and sort out many operational problems that currently exist.

The WSC SC points out that it is very clear that one of the first tasks of the new Global Director, Communications and External Relations, will be to develop a long term, sustainable communications strategy with a focus on an integrated approach to objectives, messaging and stakeholder engagement at World and Regional levels.

6.   Conclusion

As the European Region we are happy that the WSC Steering Committee recognises that the development of a new digital presence is an interactive process and that the current website does not yet fully serve all its possible audiences.

We will, in consultation with our NSOs, continue to support the WSB Central Office in making improvements to the site and will work closely with the WSC to ensure an effective, transparent and dynamic WOSM communication strategy which will not forget the external relations issue.

We remain at your disposal for any further clarifications.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Andrea Demarmels   David McKee
Chairperson   Regional Director
European Scout Committee   World Scout Bureau – European Regional Office