

RURAL YOUTH EUROPE

Membership Guidelines

2016

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Applicability:

These guidelines are subordinated to the charter of Rural Youth Europe and are to be taken as an extension and interpretation of the charter.

All changes and new revisions of this document are subject to the acceptance and approval of the General Assembly of Rural Youth Europe.

With the acceptance of these guidelines, all previous documents and regulations covering any membership principles shall become superseded.

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1 *Executive summary*

This document sets out to describe and explain the benefits of being a member of Rural Youth Europe (RYEurope), the process and costs involved to become a member, and the rights and obligations of being a member.

It is an extension and interpretation of the RYEurope charter (which can be found on the website and referred to as necessary) and is reviewed on a regular basis by the board of Rural Youth Europe. Any changes are communicated to the membership and approved at the General Assembly.

Although this document covers the same affairs as the charter of RYEurope, it is only an extension and addition to the charter and in no circumstances does it overrule the charter. In case of any conflicts to the charter, the charter remains always the highest governing document.

2 *About Rural Youth Europe*

Rural Youth Europe is a European Non-Governmental Organisation for rural youth. Established in 1957, it functions as an umbrella for youth organisations working to promote and activate young people in the countryside. It provides international training possibilities and works as an intermediary between national organisations, youth organisations and public institutions on a European level.

RYEurope is a member-led organisation: democratically constituted and led by young people for young people. It is funded through membership fees, European grants and national sponsorship.

According to the RYEurope charter, it's aims are:

- to further and promote the activities of rural youth;
- to educate and train young people;
- to create an awareness of the issues of the countryside;
- to promote international understanding through international meetings;
- to focus the attention of international and national agencies, and organisations, both governmental and private, as well as the general public on the problems and needs of rural youth.

Membership is typically open to organisations that:

- are independent, democratic and non-political at national level;
- organise activities for, and support rural youth;
- support equality and justice for all, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, sex, physical ability, sexual orientation, etc.;
- respect a co-operative approach to work and the environment which is both aesthetically and ecologically sound.

The organisations that RYEurope currently unites are:

- Young farmers' organisations, originally mainly active in the field of agriculture, but nowadays also very much involved in issues concerning youth in rural areas in general;
- Rural youth organisations, dealing with matters relating to both young farmers and other young people living in the countryside;

- 4H organisations, offering activities in the field of agriculture, home economics, crafts, entrepreneurship, nature and leisure for children and youth. (4H stands for Head, Heart, Hands and Health).

3 Membership benefits

The benefits of being a member are wide ranging both for the individual young people that participate in RYEurope activities and the member organisations themselves. They can be summarised as follows:

3.1 For organisations:

- Being a part of a strong European network of like-minded organisations that provides support and inspiration
- A platform which aids the development of its future leaders
- Activities, events and travel opportunities that provide additional benefits to offer its own members

3.2 For individuals:

- Personal development: from gaining confidence to learning new skills
- Motivation and inspiration for fulfilling leadership positions within rural communities and organisations
- A strong and long lasting international network of like-minded contacts and friends

The key benefits are published on the RYEurope website and updated regularly in consultation with the membership. The organisation strives to ensure that membership fees provide good value for members.

RYEurope also has the opportunity to, on a low level, lobby key European institutions in relation to issues affecting rural youth. Having the capacity to do so is something the board is further developing during 2016 and beyond in cooperation with member organisations. This will extend the organisation's rural youth advocacy and provide further benefits for its members.

4 *Membership groupings*

The members of RYEurope are grouped according to the geographical regions they are located:

- 1) Group I – United Kingdom and Ireland
- 2) Group II – Central Europe
- 3) Group III – Nordic Countries
- 4) Group IV – Eastern Europe

Each region is represented by a board member, about which more detail in Section 10.

If the grouping of the membership organisations becomes unbalanced, due to new or changing groupings, the regional grouping can be re-evaluated.

5 *Member rights and obligations*

5.1 *Rights*

Each member organisation (unless otherwise detailed in section 6) has the rights to:

- participate in the international or national activities organised by RYEurope or any other connected international or national organisation;
- nominate candidates for board elections according to the RYEurope election procedures;
- vote at the annual General Assembly of RYEurope;
- opt to change their membership category according to changing circumstances at a national level;
- feel comfortable to lead discussions about the development of RYEurope;
- actively participate in organising international activities and projects;
- host any of RYEurope's annual events (for which there are hosting guidelines available);
- seek knowledge about the structure and main activities of other member organisations;
- receive all information about the activities and projects run by RYEurope;
- work together with other member organisations on European wide themes;
- propose areas of interest for future seminars and other activities run by RYEurope;
- participate in composing the Monthly E-News and "Rural Voices" magazine by contributing articles, photos and illustrations about activities, experiences or other relevant projects;
- contribute to the development of, and content for, the RYEurope website;
- participate in The Rural Youth Project competition;
- receive all benefits from being a member organisation in RYEurope.

5.2 *Obligations*

It is obligated that each member organisation

- annually pays its dues according to RYEurope membership fee's policy (see section 7);
- nominates the representative(s) eligible to take decisions to, and vote at, the annual General Assembly of RYEurope;
- actively participates in the network of RYEurope;
- is active in information exchange and cooperation with other member organisations of RYEurope and RYEurope itself.

6 Membership categories

There are five membership categories in RYEurope:

- 1) Full member
- 2) Candidate member
- 3) Development member
- 4) Observer member
- 5) Sponsoring member

These categories allow for new organisations to trial membership of RYEurope, cater for organisations who may be facing financial difficulty, and allow for other external organisations to still have some involvement where relevant.

6.1 Full member

Full members have full access to all activities and events of Rural Youth Europe. Full member is the only membership category that has granted voting rights at the GA.

According to the charter of Rural Youth Europe, full member organisations with over 15,000 individual members in their own organisation count as large organisations and have two votes. Large member organisations also pay an increased membership fee.

6.2 Candidate member

This status can be granted for a maximum of 2 years, being the first 2 years in which an organisation is a member of RYEurope. It is designed to give new organisations, that have not formerly been a part of the RYEurope network, a period of trial membership.

For new organisations, it is not a requirement that they first become a candidate member, just an option.

Candidate members have no voting rights but can participate fully in all events.

Conversion of candidate members to full members is approved by the GA, and if agreed by the GA will take effect from 1st January the year following.

6.3 Development member

This category is designed primarily for member organisations who may be facing financial difficulties and enable them to remain a member but with a lower level of involvement:

- Participation in RYEurope events is limited to 3 participants per year, and a maximum of 2 at any one event (for example, 1 participant to the Spring Seminar and 2 participants to the GA & Rally or 1 participant to the Spring Seminar, 1 to the GA & Rally, and 1 to the Autumn Seminar, etc.).
- No voting rights at the GA.

6.4 Observer member

This status can be granted to international youth organisations. Observer members have no voting rights or rights to participate in events. Observer members may however be invited to attend and participate in events.

6.5 Sponsoring member

This status can be granted to other organisations, commercial firms or individuals. Sponsoring members have no rights to vote. The GA must approve the appointment of sponsoring members. Observer members may however be invited to attend and participate in events.

7 Membership fees

As part of a membership of Rural Youth Europe, the member organisation must pay an annual membership fee.

Any membership fees shown in table in section 7.2 apply for a whole year from 1st January – 31st December. There are no partial fees or any other reduction for only a part of a year, when a member does not make use of its membership rights.

7.1 Solidarity scheme

To give all member organisations, and especially those from a country with a weaker economy and lower incomes, a chance to participate actively and fully in the network, Rural Youth Europe maintains a solidarity scheme.

Member organisations from countries with a weaker economy, hereafter called Band B organisations, benefit from a reduced membership fee and reduced participation fee to Rural Youth Europe events.

As a transparent means for the calculation as to whether an organisation counts as an Band B organisation, and thus is eligible to reduced fees, GDP shall be used as the reference. Every member organisation located in a country where the GDP is below the average GDP of the European Union will benefit of the solidarity scheme and is eligible for the reduced fees.

The advantage of a reduced membership fee does not apply to any membership categories other than full member.

7.2 Fees

Membership category	Annual fee	
Candidate member	250.- €	
Full member	> 15'000 members	≤ 15'000 members
- Band A (national GDP > EU GDP)	2'800.- €	1'500.- €
- Band B (national GDP < EU GDP)	1'900.- €	1'000.- €
Development member	300.- €	
Observer members	125.- €	
Sponsoring member	To be negotiated individually.	

8 The Membership Year

The RYEurope business and membership year runs from 1st January to 31st December.

Any decisions regarding membership made at the GA (e.g. accepting new members, upgrades, termination) will take effect from the start of the new membership year.

For example, as per below, if the GA approves the acceptance of a new member organisation, that member's voting rights and ability to participate in RYEurope activities will start from 1st January, as will their obligation to pay membership fees.

Date	Action	Status
Winter 2015	A new organisation approaches RYEurope or RYEurope itself makes contact with a new organisation.	Potential member
Spring 2015	The organisation officially applies for membership of RYEurope (minimum three months before GA).	Prospective member
GA 2015	The GA transacts the application and welcomes the organisation as candidate member for the upcoming membership year 2016.	Upcoming member
1.1.2016	Organisation starts as Candidate member in the new membership year.	Candidate member
GA 2017	GA reviews the candidate member and accepts the organisation as full member with effect for the next membership year.	Candidate member
31.12.2017	Candidate membership ends with the end of the membership year (candidate membership limited to two years).	Candidate member
1.1.2018	Organisation becomes full member	Full member

9 Collection of membership fees

The secretary general will request from member organisations confirmation of their membership numbers in early January each year. Member organisations will be expected to provide the high number of members they had during the previous calendar year (recognising that membership levels vary during any given 12 month period).

Based on these figures, invoices will be issued from the RYEurope office shortly thereafter for the current membership year and must be paid in full by end of April (i.e. before the mailings in preparation for the General Assembly). If fees have not been received by this date then the member organisation may not be able to participate in any RYEurope events, or attend and vote in the General Assembly during that year.

If fees are still not received by the date of the GA itself, then the organisation will be automatically suspended with immediate effect and will have no voting rights at the GA.

No member of Rural Youth Europe shall remain under ongoing suspension for more than two years. Otherwise, the board shall recommend the termination of membership to the GA.

10 Representation on the board of Rural Youth Europe

The board of RYEurope is comprised of:

- A Chairman
- A Vice-Chairman
- Four regional board representatives
- An additional person with special expertise, as may be required

Traditionally, in rotation with the other members of their regional group, members each have the opportunity to nominate their regional board representative from within their own organisation. This ensures that over time all and especially smaller member organisations, have the opportunity to be represented on the board.

However, this system and the order of rotation is not an official regulation of RYEurope. It is up to the regional groups to agree themselves any changes and who is next eligible to nominate a candidate.

RYEurope simply encourages groups to adopt a fair and democratic system.

11 New members

11.1 Eligibility

Eligible organisations must:

- comply with organisational principles of RYEurope (set out in section 1);
- be willing to fulfil the obligations set out in section 4;
- be interested in participating in the development of national and international rural youth activities.

11.2 Process of become a member

Any prospective potential member must:

- Complete a membership application form (in which the desired membership category is declared). This is available from the RYEurope office) and should be returned to the Secretary General at least 3 months before the annual General Assembly, for initial consideration by the board. (It is recommended that prospective member organisations also discuss with the secretary general, or any board representative, their interest in joining RYEurope beforehand).
- Introduce itself (organisational structure, programmes and activities) by sending the appropriate informational materials and giving an introductory speech at the annual General Assembly of RYEurope;
- Accept invitations and nominate candidate(s) to participate in activities of RYEurope in order to get acquainted with the organisation;
- The GA will have the final decision on whether the prospective member organisation will be accepted and commence membership on 1st January of the following year.

11.3 New member categories

The RYEurope membership year commences at January 1st.

New member organisations can either join first as candidate members for two years or just one year and then become full members, or become full members straight away.

New member organisations usually join Rural Youth Europe first as candidate member for two years. Following the period of candidate membership, the GA has the decision as to accepting them as full member.

Even though the candidate membership is recommended to all new members, it is not necessarily mandatory.

11.4 Rights of prospective member organisations

Each applying organisation has rights to:

- receive all accordant information about the profile, structure, activities and programmes of RYEurope;
- to participate in the annual General Assembly of RYEurope and other activities to introduce its organisation and develop mutual understanding and contacts;
- receive confirmation of the decision on the submitted membership application verbally during the General Assembly of RYEurope, or written 3 months after it (in the case that the organisation is unable to attend the GA).
- If accepted, prospective member organisations do not have voting rights until 1st January of the following year.

12 Termination of membership

If a member organisation decides to terminate their membership of RYEurope they are obliged, as specified in the charter, to write to the secretary general by latest 30th June, explaining their reasons for departure. For the remainder of the year their membership continues and also the membership fees for the full year are still owed.

In any case if a member organisation is thinking of terminating its membership it is recommended that it first discuss this either with the secretary general, or any board representative. It might be that some changes can be made to better accommodate this organisation's needs or limitations. RYEurope is an open and democratic organisation, and one that is continually evolving based on its member's needs and decisions of the General Assembly.