

First Joint Board and Committee Meeting August 1st 2015 – Brussels, Belgium SUMMARY

Reported by Bowen Tang, Board Member



On the 1st of August 2015, IFHOHYP has reached a milestone in which, for the first time in its history, a joint meeting between the Board and the Committees took place in Brussels, Belgium. There are a total of 13 participants from 9 countries: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Russia, Sweden, Spain, Turkey, and Tunisia.

The purpose of this meeting was to provide face-to-face interactions so that communication can be more efficient between members. It is also a valuable opportunity for the Board to receive input from the committees on how to enhance the development of IFHOHYP. Points discussed in the meeting as well as the outcomes will be noted in the Strategic Plan 2016-2020, which will serve as a guideline for board and committee work pending approval at the AGM later this year.

On arrival night, after introductions and an icebreaker activity (“Two Truths and a Lie”), participants paired off to share what they would like the outcomes of the meeting to be, such as: *a concrete plan with defined responsibilities, definition of working styles within committees, etc.* Everyone agreed that the most important outcome should be redefining who we are as an organization. Who is IFHOHYP?

Sidse, the President, gave an answer which greatly inspired everyone - **“WE ARE IFHOHYP”**. IFHOHYP is no longer an organization run by only 5 people, it is now a living, breathing entity whose energy is sustained by at least 13 hard of hearing young people dedicated to make a difference. The more people there are to nourish IFHOHYP, the stronger it can become and eventually reverse its role to support the needs of its members.



The morning of the meeting was spent on a series of round-table discussions on what the true aims of IFHOHYP should be. Many participants felt that IFHOHYP should focus more effort into educational activities rather than political work, which we should work in partnership with other HOH organizations (EFHOH & IFHOH) in producing position papers. We feel that this shift into an educational framework will be more relevant to members. Advocacy work will be incorporated into the activities. We narrowed down into three main objectives:

Through our educational activities, young HOH people will

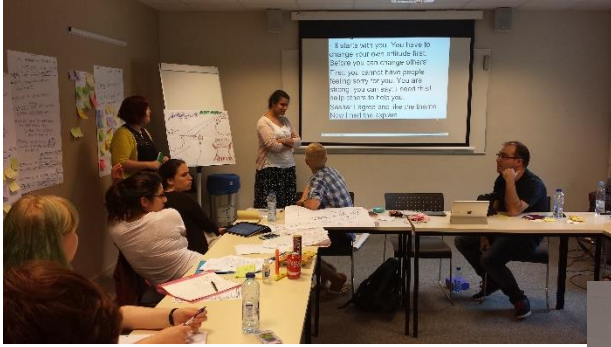
1. *Build self-confidence and develop a positive attitude towards their unique identities in the larger society*
2. *Identify their rights and needs for access to be fully included in the larger society*
3. *Employ strategies to advocate for the rights and needs to be included in the larger society*



We then identified existing problems in the lack of human resources, exploring causes of low interests from member organizations. It all comes down to communication and dissemination of information. People within the member organizations are rarely informed on the work of IFHOHYP, which is evidently seen in the number of followers on the Twitter account. There is a call to make volunteer work within IFHOHYP more attractive by clearly laying out the functions of each committee, setting expectations and offering incentives for participation. Collecting information is also key to motivate people into working with IFHOHYP. For instance, we currently have no statistics on our member organizations (e.g., demographics, frequency of activities, successes and challenges). These information will allow us to plan activities and work that will be of interests to members and therefore give them reasons to work with IFHOHYP. This methodology follows the essence of a two-way communication: exchanging and sharing ideas, learning from each other, etc. It is also because of this realization that we agreed IFHOHYP should focus time to develop and maintain close working relationship with current members before expanding its efforts to recruit new ones.

Having analyzed the problems and opportunities for solutions, participants then broke up into 5 different committees which they are part of: Expansion, Information, Strategic Plan, Study Session and Summer Camp. Using a provided template, each committee expanded on the ideas from earlier to identify short-term goals to be accomplished until AGM 2015 and long-term ones to be realized by AGM 2016. They also listed out how they will implement the steps leading to the goal, anticipating challenges and brainstorming potential stakeholders. These together form an action plan, which each committee presented and received feedback from other participants.





This emphasizes the importance of inter-committee work, especially when thinking about other committees as a potential stakeholder. No committee should be stand-alone; it will never survive without the support of others.

By the end of the day, each committee has a concrete plan of action which they can use to follow up after the meeting. Each participant reported that they feel good about the outcomes, with one praising that IFHOHYP has “new wings”. The IFHOHYP Board expresses its most appreciation for the high-quality work the participants of this meeting put in, and that it is because of their commitments that change can truly begin.



Even though the meeting was a success and there will be many more to come, we still require a substantial amount of people to support our work. There are only 2 people in most of the committees. We hope that having read this summary, you will feel comfortable in joining our team. Times have changed – IFHOHYP wants to listen to you, know you, and learn from you. It is the truth that the current Board, still a new one, have much to learn and we rely on your experience and expertise from your local organization to share best practices to operate an organization. Let us together build an international federation that serves in the best interests of hard of hearing young people worldwide. Will you answer our call? Contact us at info@ifhohyp.org or tweet us @IFHOHYP. We look forward to hearing from you.

SOME FUN MOMENTS IN BETWEEN:

