

# Reasoned Recommendation

## On the continuation of the full-time President

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The position of the full-time President was first introduced at the Autumn Federal Committee (FC) in October 2018 for a trial period of one year until the European Congress in October 2019 (holder of the position: Christopher Glück). It was then reconfirmed for the full duration of the mandate 2019-21 (holder of the position: Leonie Martin) and the mandate 2021-23 (holder of the position: Antonio Argenziano).

The Congress decided on several objectives for the role, tasking the Executive Board (EB) to:

1. Regularly monitor the benefits and risks of the full-time position in regular intervals, as well as report to the FC at every statutory meeting;
2. Submit to the Autumn FC 2022 a reasoned recommendation on the full-time position, beyond the mandate 2021-23;
3. Submit an internal resolution to that purpose at the Spring FC in 2023.

The EB has discussed the full-time role regularly during board meetings over the mandate, and Antonio – the current President of JEF Europe – will deliver a mid-term report to the 2022 Autumn FC, as he did at the 2022 Spring FC. The President will deliver another report at the 2023 Spring FC, and a final one at the 2023 European Congress.

The present reasoned recommendation is – in parallel and complementary to the President's reports – submitted to the FC to outline the advantages and disadvantages of the current arrangement, as identified by JEF Europe's Executive Board, and on the basis of which it gives a **positive recommendation to the European Congress regarding the continuation of the position of a full-time president, in particular considering the European Parliament elections which will take place under the next mandate.**

To that extent, this reasoned recommendation also seeks to provide sections and JEFers with the information necessary to re-assess the position of JEF Europe President as a full-time position, in view of the vote on the internal resolution at the 2023 Spring FC.

**The EB further gives recommendations to the next mandate holders, as per the adjustments and arrangements warranted by a continuation of the role.**

## Delivery against the objectives as set out in the Congress resolution

### 1. Improve the flow of information between EB and Secretariat

#### Objective

JEF Europe, during this mandate, has continued to operate on a substantial budget and, as a consequence, a large European Secretariat (currently 7 employees, in addition to the full-time President). While this has resulted in a continuously high operational capacity of the European level of JEF, it also translates into a risk that volunteer Board members would not be able to follow up timely on activities carried out by the Secretariat. In fact, this risk had materialised in the mandate 2017-2019, with occasional miscommunication, less political guidance of the Secretariat work, or the EB acting as a bottleneck for the Secretariat workflow. It had also reduced time resources for additional tasks of EB members, beyond following up on projects.

#### Result

This mandate has yet again set a record in JEF Europe activities. In a voluntary position, it would have been extremely difficult for the President – let alone other Board members – to keep a detailed overview (and actively contribute/participate) to the activities carried out, while maintaining time resources for other tasks of the role, such as the contact to sections and political representation and lobbying work.

The President has been deeply involved in the work of the Secretariat. Indeed, the current mandate-holder is fully integrated in the “policy team” of the Secretariat, albeit with a management role. The President therefore alleviates the management tasks from the SG, and also takes part in recruitment process and other HR work and decision-making. The need for additional management roles (either introducing sublevels to the SG or co-managing with the President by splitting areas of focus) presents itself with the current size of the Secretariat and will continue to stay as such or grow, depending on the growth of the organisation. Having a full-time President with this salary grid means we cannot employ additional management in any area with our current resources and staff construction, therefore this support is essential to the role.

The deeper involvement of the President in the Secretariat’s work has continued to provide relief to the other (voluntary) Board members<sup>1</sup>. EB members feel, on the whole, that the quality of reporting on the work of the Secretariat is high, in particular thanks to the Secretariat update given by the Secretary General at each EB meeting, and that they were able to take informed decisions. Board members also generally have more time to invest in their own individual contributions, as the key EB priorities get communicated to the Secretariat, and the President can ultimately greenlight decisions on short notice, if need be.

However, adapting to the managerial work in the Secretariat, has been very time consuming, particularly in the first months of the mandate and took time away from EB coordination. It is

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<sup>1</sup> A notable exception remains “Communications”. Indeed, while the fulltime President commits part of his time to it, volunteer EB members responsible for communications are still required to have extensive day-to-day followup, to ensure adequate communications output considering the need for paid senior staff on communication. This constant availability is difficult to guarantee in successive EBs.



understandably a consequence of the transition of the President to a full-time position that was handled, without negative consequences, thanks to the support of the VPs and to the volunteer spirit of the board. This transition phase is a risk to monitor for future mandates.

### **Risks**

Efficiency gains and increased comfort of EB members are mainly realised by EB members if – and only if – they trust the president to have a clear feeling for the views and political priorities of the EB, and is able to adequately feed them into the work of the Secretariat, as well as to report back to the EB on all relevant issues. Equally, investing time in the Secretariat should not divert resources away from the ‘core task’ of the President, which is to coordinate and lead the Executive Board.

This requires an understanding of the President as a political activist, rather than seeing the Presidency as a job; a deep knowledge of the network and the different sensitivities that are present in JEF; a trusting relationship between EB and President; experience in the dynamics of the European level of political organisations, which is typically acquired in a volunteer mandate in the EB prior to holding the Presidency. Ultimately, though, the risk that a full-time President sees themselves more as a member of the staff, than as a member of the EB, cannot be addressed other than by trusting JEF Europe to elect Presidents who represent this spirit.

## **2. Strengthen the exchange between JEF Europe and sections**

### **Objective**

The infamous “gap” between the European, national, and local levels of European youth organisations is not unique to JEF, and to some extent will always exist; yet, we should address this divide as much as we can. The objective of the full-time role was also to make the European level more available and reachable, and give time to the EB to understand the needs of sections and members.

### **Result**

The possibility for the President to attend seminars on weekdays is a major advantage of the full-time position, as it gives the possibility to better blend project work with the key political positions and advocacy work of JEF Europe, as well as meet JEFers and partner organisations.

As in past mandates, the President is the contact person for fewer sections than other Executive Board Members. The current EB does not see a specific need for the full-time President to concentrate on section work as this important task is well distributed among the Executive Board. Moreover, the position of membership officer also increases the resources and time allocated to working with sections. The President remains available to have meetings with all sections should they wish to have one.

### **Risks**

Sections are invited to keep maintaining a relationship with their designated EB contact points, despite the availability of the President.



### **3. Increase JEF Europe's political advocacy and representation work**

#### **Objective**

The full-time role should allow JEF to take up more opportunities for representation, build a better political network, and improve JEF's advocacy work.

#### **Result**

The full-time role has an important impact on the ability of JEF to carry out professional advocacy work. This is all the more important in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe, an overarching priority for the federalist movement, and the upcoming European elections. A full-time president allows for the organisation to have an external face.

Since the beginning of the mandate Antonio was able to take on 106 opportunities of public representations of JEF, 32 of which relating to the Conference on the Future of Europe. This continued to establish JEF Europe as the go-to organisation for the views of European youth political organisations on the Conference, and on the future of Europe at large.

While the result is difficult to practically quantify, it can be illustrated by two instances: our work on the Conference on the Future of Europe/treaty change (Strasbourg summit, external events, networking) and Ukraine (YouthResponsEUkraine, civil society mission to Ukraine).

The possibility for Antonio to participate to partners' meetings of the various projects organised by the Secretariat, and attend and contribute to events on weekdays is a main advantage of the role, not least because it demonstrates commitment to our partner organisations and strengthens the links for cooperation beyond the projects themselves.

It also allows JEF to be at the right place at the right time and to pick up opportunities, which would not be available to a volunteer President without a significant presence in Brussels. Reporting to the EB on those opportunities open by the full-time scheme is important to assess its results.

#### **Risks**

There is a risk that, while able to respond to more event invitations, the full-time President would not proactively seek and hold meetings with MEPs and other relevant figures for our advocacy. The risk is, at present and in general, considered to be low. The risk can be offset by rolling out and using to a wider extent the CRM database - where interactions can be logged, monitored, and reported on - for its political advocacy. Use of the database would also allow the EB, and JEF at large, to quantify informal meetings (such as "coffee meetings"). Moreover, meetings held by the President might not systematically advance JEF's policy objectives. However, regular reporting on the meetings, and the President's strong involvement in the setting of JEF-Europe political priorities, address the risk.

## Challenges and disadvantages

### Role distinction between Secretary General (SG) and President

Having structured the Secretariat in thematic teams (policy, communications, projects) has helped to maintain the distinction between the roles. In turn, the President needs to maintain a political, but not operational view of the projects involving JEF Europe.

### Risk that President might become “part of the Secretariat” rather than “part of the Board”

As discussed, there is a clear advantage in the daily involvement of the President in the Secretariat’s work. It is the responsibility of the President to maintain their role as a political steer of the organisation.

### Costs and financial sustainability

The full-time president is a rather costly expense for the organisation. The added-value needs to be evaluated against its opportunity costs and the financial situation of the organisation.

The current operating grant under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Value programme of the European Union creates certainty of funding for the future mandate. It is also possible to fund the position partially through other streams, like the grants related to the European elections. Funding is therefore secured until end-2025. There is an ongoing effort between the Secretariat and the Treasurer to diversify JEF's income via its fundraising strategy. This may, in the medium-term, open new avenues to make the funding of the full-time President position more predictable.

To offer the President a full-time position is a tradeoff as this money could be used to cover other staff, be it an extra manager or an extra policy officer. Similarly, should JEF run out of other money than the operating grant (no project other than the operating grant ) during a mandate we could not cover all staff. Moreover, paying the President could create frictions/misunderstandings that some board members are paid and some are not in future mandates.

### Personal challenges of the change from a volunteer position to a fulltime one

Becoming a full-time president is an adjustment as it requires learning a new way of commitment, different day planning and a new role of manager of paid staff which can be new to some volunteers. Cumulating daywork and volunteer hours matching other EB members’ schedules could put a strain on the President.

Moreover, shifting from volunteer to full time is an adjustment all the more so difficult when combined with relocating from a different country. Should the next President, like this mandate, live in a different city, the full-time scheme creates an additional burden on the mandate holder who leaves their job/studies, habits and social life behind. While the risk depends on the mandate holder, their personality and past experiences, it is to be expected that a transition period would be required before the next mandate holder takes full ownership of the role, which can be alleviated with support from other Executive Board members with previous EB experience, including the Secretary General.



### **Professional nature of the role might attract a different set of candidates in the long run and restrict the pool of candidates**

This is a risk to be watched, on two accounts: on the one side, that candidates for President do not see the position merely as a job, but rather as a way to empower them to carry out more tasks and achieve more results; on the other side, that the professionalisation of the President's role does not irreversibly deter candidates who may be willing and able to carry out their duties as volunteers.

While allowing anyone to dedicate their full time to the organisation, regardless of their current place of residence / occupation, the full-time position might restrict the pool of candidates by requiring them to leave everything behind for the association.

In addition to regular monitoring and reporting to JEF statutory bodies, the EB recommends to make the funding available to support a President to do the position full-time (or even part-time), but that a candidate seeking to run on an unpaid basis would be able to do so in the resolution to be adopted at the 2023 Spring FC to ensure candidacies to the position.

## **Recommendations going forward**

1. The EB recommends the continuation of the full-time role for the next mandate, to be re-evaluated taking into account the financial resources of JEF Europe on an ongoing basis, and no later than by the incoming EB at the Spring FC 2023.
2. The primary focuses of the President should be:
  - a. Political representation,
  - b. Leading and coordinating the Executive Board,on top of working with sections, when relevant (as contact person or as support to others).
3. The distinction between SG and President should continue to be made clear, also to staff, in particular to new staff joining the Secretariat and with particular regards to management decisions, with the exception of the policy officer who chiefly relies on the guidance of the President to carry out their tasks.
4. The President should, in tandem with the SG, coordinate timely input of the EB on future and on-going projects.
5. The President provides a brief update to the Secretariat, at the start of each internal team meeting, on the political agenda agreed upon by the EB, explicitly relating project work to JEF's federalist mission.
6. The President provides monthly updates of their advocacy work to the Executive Board to reduce the asymmetry of information.