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Author:	DK6SP, DL8GM; OH3OT		

Introduction

The Region 1 Youth Working Group (YWG) is responsible for promoting Amateur Radio Youth Activities in Region 1 through the coordination and engagement with IARU Region 1 Member Societies. The main program of the Youth Working group is known as Youngsters On The Air (YOTA).

The Covid-19 pandemic unfortunately had severe effects on the Youth WG, as well into 2021 the continuing contact and travel restrictions made the in-person events so central to the YOTA program impossible. Despite this rough start, the Youth WG still tried to pursue its goal of getting young people engaged in the hobby, including the Train-The-Trainer (TTT) aspect introduced by the 2017 IARU-R1 General Conference (GC) in Landshut.

With the lifting of most pandemic-related restrictions in 2022 the YOTA program could pick up once again where it stopped before, and run its very popular and successful camps, most importantly the summer camps in Croatia in 2022 and Hungary 2023 as well as the return of the subregional camps, starting with one in Madrid, Spain in 2023.

Questions and Recommendations to Member Societies

- Continue the current YOTA program, including but not limited to the in-person summer and subregional camps, as well as December YOTA Month (DYM) and YOTA Contest.
- Update the Youth WG's Terms of Reference, taking into account the development and activities of the past years.
- Elect (rather than appoint) one of the YWG Vice Chairs.
- Despite a decision at the 2020 Virtual General Conference (VGC), the majority of member societies still has not appointed a Youth Coordinator. We urge those

member societies to appoint a point of contact in order for us to better reach youth in all of IARU-R1.

- Train The Trainer has shown very limited interest and engagement from member societies, despite having been introduced by their request at the GC in 2017. What do the member societies expect from this program, and what should be done to increase both interest and participation?

Main Activities

YOTA Summer Camp

Since the last (virtual) general conference, two YOTA summer camps have been held. The Croatian camp, which the Youth WG and HRS originally planned for 2020, finally took place in 2022. For 2023, the camp was held in Hungary, organised by MRASZ based on plans originally made for a subregional camp in 2020.

The YOTA summer camp is an annual one-week event in which young radio amateurs aged 15–25¹ engage in various activities covering the vast possibilities offered by ham radio. In addition to the organiser-provided activities, the camp also fosters direct exchange between the participants, who come from very different backgrounds and cultures all over Region 1. As such, participants can not only hone their radio skills, but also other skills central to our modern world, including intercultural communication, presentation as well as foreign languages.

Starting after the 2017 IARU-R1 GC, Train The Trainer became a central part of the camps' activities. The aim of TTT is to make the camps a more sustainable event than simply one week of fun, by motivating and guiding participants to organise similar, smaller-scale events in their home countries in the future.

YOTA Subregional Camps

YOTA Subregional Camps are a new type of event introduced at the 2017 IARU-R1 GC. The purpose of subregional camps is to organise smaller-scale events, focusing only on parts of IARU Region 1 (hence the term subregional). These camps have a smaller number of participants (about 25-50), and usually take place over an extended weekend (i.e. Thursday or Friday to Sunday).

Just like the summer camp, the subregional camps have also come to a halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and are only now starting to pick up pace again. URE has organised the single subregional camp in this three-year period in Spain in 2023, which has unfortunately additionally been plagued by many late cancellations from participants. Nevertheless the

¹ With one general exception being team leaders, for which the age range is 18–30.

YWG decided for the event to happen, as to not continue the cancellation trend that 2020 forced upon us.

We hope for other member societies to start new or continue with their plans to host more subregional camps, and we have in fact received notes of interest from several countries to organise such events in the future.

Youth Contesting Program (YCP)

The Youth Contesting Program has been part of YOTA-related activities for many years. For this program, many so-called “big gun” contest stations open their doors for youngsters to operate during a contest. In addition to practising their contesting skills, YCP gives the participants an opportunity to get to know the host country as well as of course other youngsters, be them from the host country themselves or other participants travelling from abroad.

There has been decent success over previous years to have more station owners interested in having their station participate in the YCP. Unfortunately, there often was a severe lack of interest from participants, which combined with the pandemic has effectively halted YCP activity for the past years. Reviving the YCP will be one of the YWG’s main goals in the coming years.

December YOTA Month (DYM)

December YOTA Month is the Youth Working Group’s main on-the-air activity. For the entire month of December, YOTA-suffixed special event callsigns operated by youngsters are activated all over the world. These callsigns have proven to be extremely popular for young and old operators alike, and the available diploma gives yet another incentive for people to search the bands and/or DX cluster for those stations.

For the youngsters operating the stations, DYM provides them an opportunity to be on the busy side of a pileup, which is an entirely new experience for many of them. In addition, many countries take DYM as an occasion for smaller youth meetups, often at larger stations, giving another chance for exchange among youngsters as well as operating skills practise from a well-equipped station.

In the last three years, participants’ number has increased from 46 in 2020 to 60 in 2022, and currently there's been a streak for the last four years where the 100 000 QSO mark has been surpassed, being 2020 a great year in this regard, reaching 137 000 QSO. In 2021 120 000 QSO were reached and 2022 was finished with 108 000 QSO.

YOTA Online

To fill the void caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Youth Working Group followed the general trend of introducing new online events. The newly-created YOTA Online program consisted of live streamed monthly sessions on various ham radio-related topics. General interest in the program was very evident by the several hundred concurrent viewers generally showing up. However, steadily declining viewer numbers made the YWG decide to stop the program after the 12th session.

We nevertheless consider it a success, as it has brought together youngsters once again during times when the usual occasions for in-person meetups were cancelled or made difficult to attend due to travel or other pandemic-related restrictions.

YOTA Contest

2021 finally saw the introduction of a new on-air activity, based on an idea that has been floating around for many years: The YOTA Contest. It is ostensibly a regular 12-hour mixed-mode (SSB+CW) contest on the usual contest bands, with some provisions to make it more interesting for youngsters:

- More “casual” categories. A three-band as well as a 6h category enable participation and competition for top spots without the station setup and time commitment associated with a full-time all-band participation.
- Higher points for youngster contacts: 10-13 points for working a youngster (depending on age), as opposed to 1 or 3 points (own continent/DX) for an operator >25 years.
- A station sponsor category, incentivising station owners to make their station available for youngsters to operate in exchange for getting publicity and recognition for their efforts.

The YOTA Contest is held three times per year, with dedicated scoring for each round as well as a combined score after the last round. In addition, the last round will be happening during DYM, providing diploma hunters with yet another chance to work more YOTA callsigns.

Train The Trainer

Train the Trainer is a platform and program where Youth Coordinators and other young amateur radio enthusiasts can exchange their ideas, experiences, and materials. The goal of the program is to help other societies to arrange youth activities. The Train the Trainer program was first introduced at the 2018 YOTA Summer Camp in South Africa at the request of the IARU Region 1 member societies in the 2017 General Conference held in Landshut.

Since then the program has played an important role in YOTA camps as well as outside of them. The program is managed by the Train the Trainer coordinator who is a member of the Youth Working Group.

Outside of the camp, operations of Train the Trainer are based on the ham-yota.com website. The website includes activity reports from the member societies. In the reports member societies share ideas and knowledge about their past activities, and tell about the challenges and ways to overcome them. In 2021 and the beginning of 2022 these reports were gathered on a quarter-year basis but due to declining answer rates in 2022, the reports were only requested during the two main events of the year. These two events are the annual YOTA Summer Camp and December YOTA Month. Despite this, some active societies send reports more often from their activities. Currently, 35 countries have contributed to Train the Trainer reports. All these reports are uploaded to the webpage, and even more countries have contributed to Train the Trainer at the Summer Camps.

Train the Trainer at the YOTA Summer Camps

Train the Trainer is an important part of the annual YOTA Summer Camps. Due to Covid-19 in the past three years, only two summer camps have been organised. The first of these two camps was YOTA Croatia in 2019. The Train the Trainer related activities in Croatia consisted of five sessions one of which was held outside of the camp area. The sessions introduced the program to the audience and offered knowledge for future youth work outside of the camps. In the program participants also created activity cards that offer an easy way to organise youth activities from scratch. The Train the Trainer sessions at the camp were held by the Train the Trainer Coordinator and volunteer presenters from the participating teams. Teams who presented their own youth activities at the camp were Lithuania, Czechia, Italy, Croatia, Finland, Japan, and Serbia.

Similar to Croatia, Train the Trainer was a visible topic at the Summer Camp in Hungary in 2023. The idea of Train the Trainer was behind several sessions held at the camp. At the camp, the participating teams briefly talked about youth activities in their countries. Similar to this there also was a session in which the teams were divided into groups to discuss the current state of youth in their societies. In Hungary, the feedback from the camp in Croatia was taken into account with the sessions being more interactive with online quiz tools and increasing amount of group discussions. The participants also took part in creating Train the Trainer materials to be shared on the ham-yota.com website. Similar to Croatia, volunteers from the participating teams presented their own youth activities. In Hungary, presentations were held by teams from Spain, Belgium, and France. Also, experiences of a participant at the Youth on the Air camp held in Ottawa, Canada, were presented.

At the Hungary camp teams' opinions and feedback from the program were gathered. The current form of Train the Trainer needs updating for it to better adapt to society's needs. The change is necessary to increase the amount of participation from the member societies.

Public Relations

The public relations (PR) team of the Youth Working Group has of course continued their successful work of promoting the YWG and most importantly the various aspects of the YOTA program.

During the pandemic-related restrictions, the focus of course was the activity on several online platforms. The biggest activity of course was the aforementioned YOTA Online program being streamed on three platforms (Facebook, Twitch, Youtube), with Youtube far-reaching the largest audience. The latter platform is also the one having seen the largest growth, with our subscriber numbers having almost tripled over the past three years. Growth on other platforms has been slower, but decent at about +30% subscriber count on Facebook and +25% follower count on X (formerly known as Twitter).

As another one-time online platform, the YWG was present at the virtual HAMRADIO fair “in Friedrichshafen” in 2021. The YWG was present for the entirety of the fair at their own selfbuilt virtual booth. That same booth also provided the space for general IARU-R1 representation.

Of course with the return of in-person fairs following the lifting of most pandemic-related restrictions, the YWG was once again present at several large fairs. The most important of those of course being HAMRADIO in Friedrichshafen, being the largest ham radio fair within Region 1.

Both the 2022 and 2023 editions were a great success with each having several main stage presentations and of course the International Youth Meeting. Unfortunately, the booth placement in 2022 severely limited the visitor presence to the YWG booth. 2023 however proved extremely redeeming, with the joint YWG + IARU-R1 booths providing a visible and popular place for exchange between the YWG, interested hams both young and old, IARU-R1 member societies, and potential sponsors for future events.

At the invitation of IARU and ARRL, the YWG was in 2023 also present at the world’s largest ham fair, the annual Dayton Hamvention. The semi-joint booth with IARU and ARRL’s education program enabled important exchange about youth activities within the different IARU regions. This will ideally enable deeper collaboration within IARU, for a bright future of our hobby worldwide.

The Youth Working Group

Behind the chair there is a large team, enabling the work of the Youth Working Group in the first place. The current team consists of (in alphabetical order of their callsigns) Claudia DC2CL, Philipp DK6SP, Konrad DK7ON, Leon DL3ON, Markus DL8GM, Mario EA1JAY, Tomi HA8RT, Jamie M0SDV, Martina OK2YLQ, Alžbeta OM1DP, Pieter ON1GPS,

Yentel ON3YH, Henni OH1ESI, Vilma OH2VT, Otava OH3OT, Gustav SA7GGO. Over the coming three years, the Youth Working Group is aiming to prepare a transition into a Committee.