

INTERNATIONAL TAXATION (ITPG)

Thoughts to Share After the First Young ITPG Meeting

By **Oliver Biernat**

Adam Braun once said that “the single most powerful element of youth is our inability to know what’s impossible”. Since that was one of the mottos I followed when I was young (even without knowing the saying from Adam Braun), I thought that we should give the younger generation, who are likely to follow the tax partners in GGI member firms, a chance to meet, network, discuss, present, and learn from each other.

All previous attempts in the last ten years to discuss tax with young people at Easy Meets were not successful and I was wondering why they were so silent, and it was often a monologue by the presenter, who was always an experienced tax partner. This was the time when YITPG (“Y” for “Young”) was born – limited to young people and organised and chaired by them.

The first YITPG meeting ever took place in Stockholm at the EasyMeet in October. It was a small group of 14 people from ten countries, not older than 40 and none of them partners. Luckily, I was able to convince Rikesh Patel, tax consultant at Lawrence Grant Chartered Accountants (London, UK) to organise and chair the inaugural meeting.

In 2½ hours, topics covered a wide range and included “AI & Digital Transformation”, “KYC & AML Rules”, “Moving from the UK to the EU”, “Indirect Tax Cross Border Issues for Individuals”,

“Working in the Netherlands”, and “Exchange of Information Between Authorities Reportable to Cross-Border Arrangements”. After the meeting, I asked all participants for feedback and am happy to share the results with you below.

The feedback received was very positive. Participants especially liked the brief and to-the-point presentations on interesting/current topics, insight into the various GGI member firms, presentations by fellow young participants, having time to socialise and to get to know each other (instead of just listening to presentations), the good mix of people who were mostly on the same level on the career ladder or heading in the same direction, the good location, and open and interested attendees.

There was little response to my question of what they did not like, apart from “nothing” or “all perfect”. However, room for improvement seems to be here: “we should have met over lunch before the meeting or the evening before to break the ice between delegates before the event especially as a lot of new faces” and “lots of programme in just a short amount of time. Maybe a day longer would be good.”

Asking what the age limit should be, some said “40” or “20–40”, while others said that there should be no age restrictions, but it should target only non-partners. The majority thought everyone felt more confident and open to speaking

their mind and talking about their knowledge without worrying about saying something wrong.

For all except one, the perfect number of participants seems to be a small group, as it is easier to get to know the other participants. The meeting in Stockholm was the perfect size – good to meet everyone and feel at “home” quickly and to give attendees a better feeling to speak and discuss. A group of 15 to 20 people seems to be a good size.

When asking what topics they would like to discuss they answered “international and national tax issues one may encounter when crossing the border, but also specific topics concerning on a national level”, “exchange experiences shared by participants”, and last, but not least, with “up-to-date topics that are not necessarily technical or tax-related, but are still affecting our work environment (like AI, career-related topics or hearing about structures in several firms)”. All agreed that it is important to have a good mix of everything.

When I asked for the perfect format, like presentations of one or two persons, discussions, case studies, and exchange of experience, they said that all the mentioned presentation forms are good – a mix would be useful and would keep things interesting. Listening, but also being included in different topics, keeps it fun and interesting.

My question, “When is a good time for the YITPG meetings?” was



Participants of the YITPG meeting

answered mostly with “between 3 to 4 hours with the maximum time for one presentation of 1½ hours”. One attendee believes that the long-term plan should be to have a whole day in its own right.

When I asked who could imagine organising and chairing one of the next YITPG meetings, some said “yes”, so I know whom to approach for next year. All seem to be interested in participating and presenting in future EasyMeets.

When I asked them to add any comments, it was mentioned that “Rikesh did a great job in chairing and putting together the presentations for the meeting. The content was interesting and up to date. His LinkedIn trick to connect to the

other participants in a heartbeat was super. It was also great to combine the event with another event.” Somebody else just said, “Big well done and thank you for the opportunity”. Another commented, “For the first YITPG, it was a success and we need to keep building on this to increase the numbers and this should be the long-term plan.” Finally, I received this feedback from a first-time attendee: “All in all it was a great first meeting for me. I got to know interesting people with great personalities and listened to topics, which gave me something to think about. It is a great opportunity for the younger people to connect with others and build their own network. We also received great advice on opportunities and taking chances in the business world which I think is

the best foundation to move forward and make progress career wise.”

I have nothing to add.

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