

News Bulletin

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Caucasus Project

The Identity of Diversity

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Happen for 20 Years**

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AEGEE marriages**

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and more! ▶



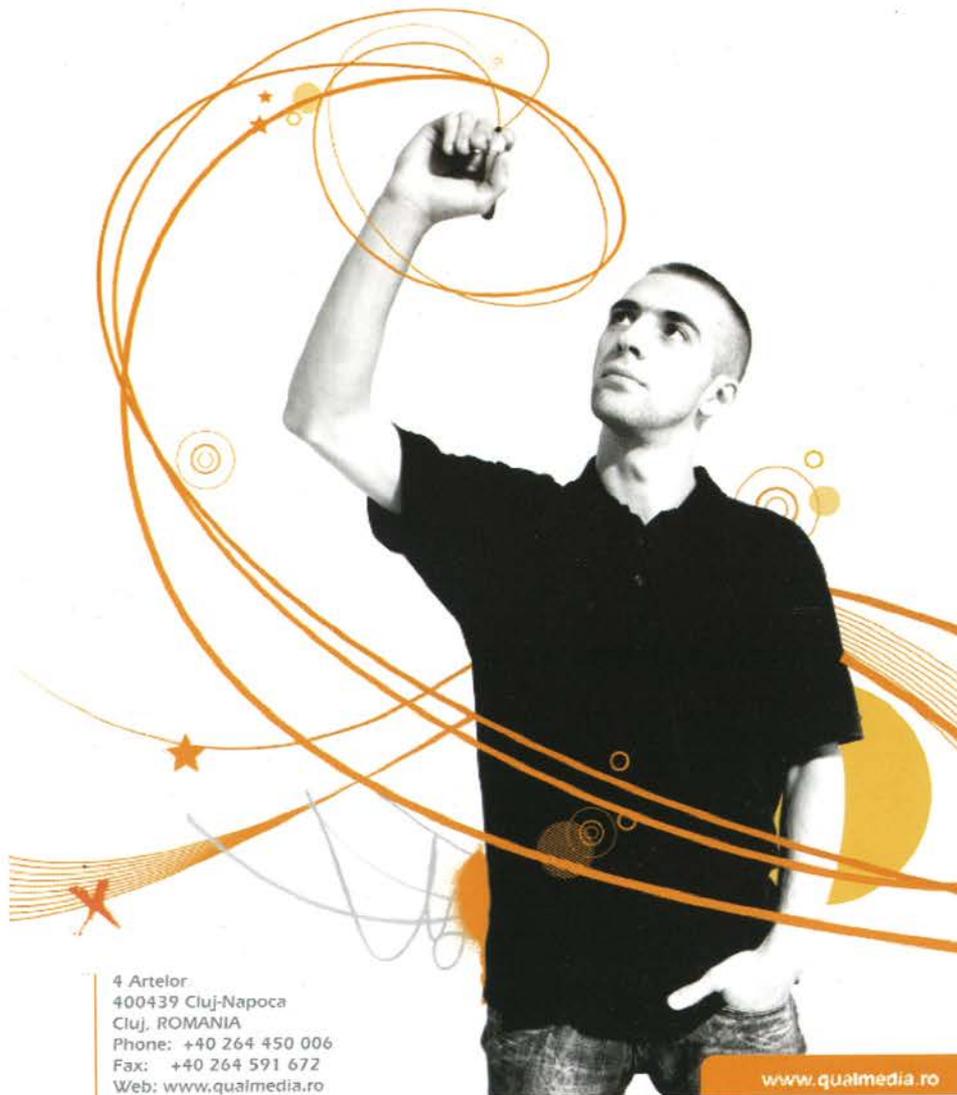
Autumn 2007



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Imprint

Publisher

AEGEE-Europe
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1030 Schaarbeek/Brussels
Belgium
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Printing

Qual Media
Cluj Napoca - Romania

Circulation

5000 copies

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ISSN 1026-227X



Education and Culture DG



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Editor's Letter

Dear reader,

In the last 22 years, AEGEE has come a long way; full of success and enthusiasm, regardless of any difficulties. Every time, we find a way to make things work and often, to make them work better. News Bulletin was such an idea. A biannual internal publication, created to inform AEGEEans about happenings in the network as well as AEGEE bodies and projects, bringing us closer.

With this edition of the News Bulletin, you will find more about our vision and mission, the Liaison

agency, new forms of European Schools, both ES2 and FRES, current and subsequent Year Plan topics, our working groups and projects and, hot off the press, the interesting stories of our newest antennae. Moreover, Dr. Love prepared a test to check your level of 'AEGEE love spirit'. Last but not least, the motivated new team of the Caucasus Project blinks to you and the future.

News Bulletin Autumn 2007 is now waiting for you to turn its pages...

On behalf of the whole NB team,

Gülece Şenel
Editor-in-Chief



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AEGEE in the Past and Carrying To the Future

The Identity of Diversity - or How to Ask Yourself the Most Obvious Questions...

Radu Racareanu

Throughout its history, AEGEE has on several occasions attempted to define its identity. Typical of a grass-roots association, people within AEGEE always felt what AEGEE was all about without being able to determine it. They were more attracted by the desire to do things for Europe, in whichever way this was individually understood by members, rather than the desire to clearly sort out what AEGEE stood for. The urge to assume an identity came about by the ever expanding popularity of the association, by questions of general orientation in this enlarged association and by questions of its efficiency, the question if we actually reached some results in our efforts for the realisation of an ever more integrated Europe.

The need for a text that would avoid the pitfalls of the past and set a general direction for the association, finally found its embodiment in the Statement of Principles.

The above text is taken from the 10th Anniversary Book of AEGEE. Quite probably, plagiarising it for this edition would have been the easiest way to write an article about the vision of AEGEE, since nobody would have noticed.

However, a very interesting question then appears. Does the continued resonance of these words mean that AEGEE still has an identity as weak as it had twelve years ago?!

Vision and Identity – boring bla-bla, or the essence of our activity

We are young, dynamic and diverse. And we cherish those facts. But are these characteristics enough to give us an identity, to give us an added value next to other young, dynamic and diverse organisations?! As the opening paragraph states, we have developed a Statement of Principles to express our ideals, but how many of us really know its meaning or even of its existence?! Values like tolerance, diversity, interculturalism, human rights, open-mindedness and mobility are things that most members associate with AEGEE, but the question still remains: is this enough for a shared vision?

We all had different reasons for joining AEGEE. We have had fun, gained friends and experience, we can fill our CV with different things, but the really difficult question is what we have achieved beyond this. AEGEE strives for a more unified

Europe. Did we manage to move things in this direction and if so, how exactly? If a 'unified Europe' is our objective, do we actually share the same understanding of it? Do we feel that we are working for the same goals? For example, does

student mobility – one of the main AEGEE goals in the early years – represent the same thing as it did 22 or even 10 years ago, taking into account the enlargement of the EU, new institutional programmes, lower transportation costs and growing economies?

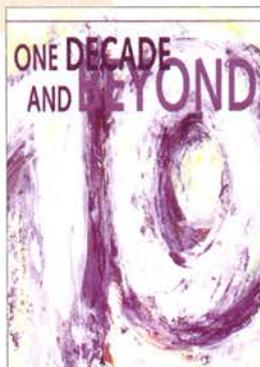
We organise dozens of events every year on different topics, we join various initiatives of other organisations and we try to get our point across to decision-makers. On the other hand, questioning of our priorities and the effectiveness and efficiency of our actions occurs constantly between new and more experienced members.

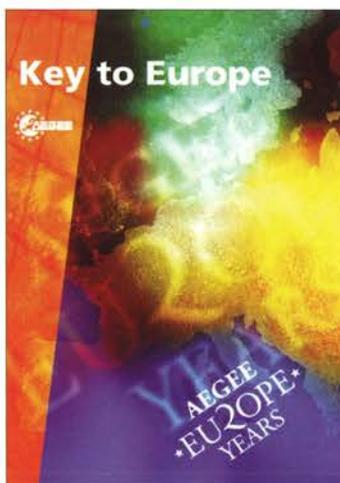
In the beginning

AEGEE was formed in 1985 to give students a voice at the European level. Revolutionary projects and activities, stirring up a politically stagnant Europe, gained wide acclaim. In its first years, AEGEE had direct access to heads of states and governments, mayors of great European metropolises and key European representatives.

AEGEE created platforms for debate for students in many diverse areas, putting them directly in touch with decision makers. At the same time it gave young people from the European Community - and after the fall of Communism from all over Europe – the opportunity to get to know other cultures and discover completely new aspects of 'the other' and in this way, also of themselves.

As time passed, the activities of AEGEE were extended in various fields, but also the scope changed. More and more supportive activities have been developed, and due to the ever growing network, especially in terms of the size of branches, more and more activities were focused on existing members. And why not, in an organisation of 15,000 people? Reaching so many at once with a project is already a major success.





Today

As in its first years, AEGEE is still a front-runner in several projects, such as those focused on the Caucasus. At the same time, we have formed very good relationships with other youth NGOs and partnerships with important institutions. From a human resources perspective we do have problems in filling certain positions, but looking back, similar problems existed ten years ago. Some projects are more successful and some less, just as in 1997.

In the end, maybe AEGEE has not changed so much. But Europe has. With twice as many member states of the European Union, more programmes for students and young people, more affordable mobility, and the most important of all, many other student and youth organisations with very focused activities and a highly effective approach to institutions, the impact of AEGEE is much diluted.

In conclusion, the issue is not that AEGEE is better or worse than 10, 15 or 22 years ago, but that we must keep pace with the rest of Europe. In an environment with growing demands, AEGEE needs to make relevant contributions or it will disappear into the shadows.

Dilemmas

Our identity problem is especially hard to tackle because it is the

point which reunites all the defining characteristics of the association. These traits are finally shaped by its members, each with a different background and interests.

Therefore, the first dilemma is: which kind of members we need to attract. AEGEE opens minds and broadens horizons. Everyone who has organised an event or has been active in AEGEE for a while, knows what a strong impact it can have on the shaping of one's personality. So, from this point of view, everybody should join AEGEE as they will discover for themselves their own paths. On the other hand, the number of people who never become active members and also those who leave feeling de-motivated, beg the question of whether we should first decide, before recruiting anyone, what AEGEE is all about.

The second dilemma is that of the scope of activities. Because of the strong impact that AEGEE has on its own members and its network, the temptation to focus everything internally is very strong. In the end, that leads to even the activities that are supposed to be "open" to all students, only being promoted among existing AEGEE members, which means that actually only they will have access to the event. At the same time, our human resources problems suggest that many activities do not even reach our members properly. Otherwise having projects that cover a network of 15,000 or even 10,000 young Europeans would already be something to be proud of.

Thirdly, AEGEE began its existence as a "militant" organisation, meaning it represented the voice of a certain group – the students of Europe – within wider society. Therefore, its activities were meant first of all to collect these opinions and then make them heard around Europe. As time passed, more and

more activities with the aim to provide certain services to young people developed. From summer universities to trainings, job fairs or fun events, AEGEE shifted its focus from a militant organisation to a service provider. However this has not happened in a balanced manner. Although the network is in general more service oriented, because this way the AEGEE locals become more attractive to their potential members, the European level organs with a role in external representation – especially the Comité Directeur, but also project teams, are left to represent the voice of an organisation where actually only a few people are speaking.

Finally, due to the proliferation of youth organisations acting on a European scale, the goals of the association need to be clarified according to the added value that AEGEE can give in fighting for a certain goal, more than the other organisations that deal with the same issues. In this way, we will not overlap with others and waste our resources without achieving clear results.

By choosing between the alternatives I have presented, AEGEE can become many different things, close to or far from what its founders expected. Perhaps though, the only real truth is that AEGEE is like life: we take our choices, and it is up to us what we make of them!

Radu Racareanu, 24, is supporting the human resources development of AEGEE as the speaker of the Human Resources Working Group of AEGEE, the Academy.



Investigating with diplomacy

The story of L.O. and L.A.

Veronica Dumitrescu

Ties, good AEGEE knowledge, diplomacy and investigator skills. This is the profile of what I call AEGEE ambassadors and spies, at the same time. Ambassadors because their main task is to keep the contact between AEGEE and international, European and national institutions, foundations, governments, etc. For what are they using their spies' qualities? Liaison Officers and Liaison Agents must be always informed on the activities of the institutions they are appointed to. Their role is to keep the Comité Directeur and the network informed on different programs of the institutions, where AEGEE can be involved.

For representing the association towards a specific institution/organisation, the work of these ambassadors-spies consists in few different steps:

First of all, a Liaison Officer (LO) or a Liaison Agent (LA) has to check in details the activities developed by the institution he is responsible for and stay updated with the news.

More than just checking the profile of the company or delegations, they have to keep informed AEGEE on the programmes, projects in

AEGEE Liaison Officers:

UNESCO (*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation*): Viktoriya Voytsekhovska.

United Nations: Sebastian Schopp.

World Bank: Claudio Piras,

European Cultural Foundation: Veronica Dumitrescu.

OECD (*Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation*): Matthias Brien.

which our members can get involved; seminars, conferences, internships, congresses, competitions, and festivals.

Another important issue is informing the network on the different grant opportunities coming from different institutions. After forwarding this information to the network, they also have to provide assistance to our members, antennas for submitting application.

But what exactly is the difference between the position of Liaison Officer and the Liaison Agent?

According to the *Corpus Iuridicum Aegeense (C.I.A)*, *Liaison Officers* (Los) are appointed to maintain a link with international and European institutions/organisations.

Liaison Agents are appointed to maintain a link with governments, EU delegations, embassies, National Agencies, National Youth Councils, foundations, other NGOs and companies.

Either you think about a Diesel internship or how to get a grant for your cultural project, now you know that you can check the AEGEE online Address book, contact the LO/LA and you will receive their assistance.

For becoming a L.O or L.A the general criteria is to speak one of the official languages of the institution/organisation he/she is appointed to, to have good knowledge on its profile and to live close to its headquarters.

Liaison Agency: While Liaison Officers have to give reports on regular bases directly to the CD member that was appointed for him, the Liaison Agents are organ-

ised in the so called Liaison Agency, chaired by a Chair person named by the Comité Directeur.

Starting August 2007 Stefan Wittwer, from AEGEE-

AEGEE Liaison Agents:

BMBF(German Ministry for Education and Research): Stefan Wittwer.

Spanish Youth Council: Javier Ortega Santos.

Diesel: Valentina Morselli.

European Institute for Democratic Participation: Olaf B Koens.

Heinz Schwarzkopf Stiftung 'Junges Europa': Matthias Weber.

Development Youth Policy - Giovanni Soffietti.

Global Institute for Leadership and Civic Development: Miljan Radunovic.

Italian Socrates National Agency: Claudio Valerio.

Turkish National Youth Council: Hakan Gümüs.

Kaiserslautern dared to take over a position that was inexistent in the past few years, because he believes that with his experience and work he can give the Liaison Agents support and assistance.

What are your main tasks as the Chair person for L.A.

- According to the *Corpus Iuridicum Aegeense (CIA)*, the Chairperson of the Liaison Agency 'coordinates the work of the LAs, is responsible for a good flow of communication between the Comité Directeur and LAs, and reports to the Comité Directeur and to the network on the activities of LAs.'



Stefan Wittwer

Currently the task effectively consists of getting a general idea of what all the different Liaison Agents are doing, to (re)build the structure of the Liaison Agency, to (re)animate communication (maybe also among each other) and after putting the Liaison Agency on a firm basis to figure out where to improve, where to realize synergy effects or where to prioritize. I'm sure that there are numerous opportunities where more Liaison Agents can be 'installed' successfully and usefully!

Communication within the Liaison Agency - channel of communication, frequency?

- We have recently set up a special mailing list for the Liaison Agency. After introducing myself, together with Tinatin, I prepared a questionnaire to get a brief overview of the current state. On this basis I could ask the LAs for specific further information and get in contact with them. As at least every two months there should be a written report about the development of the Liaison Agency, this will most probably be the frequency of communication with LAs as

long as there's no special reason (e.g. a deadline) for shorter intervals.

Interpersonal relation with the L.A (you know personally the people you are working with?)

- I don't know the single LAs in person yet, but I hope and am looking forward to change that!

What are the challenges of this position for you?

- The AEGEE structure renounces national structures for idealistic reasons. This is one of the highest values in AEGEE as this is the possibility to exemplify a functioning Europe without borders. Nevertheless there are borders in Europe and sometimes it might be useful to coordinate activities towards national agencies, companies, institutions, governments, non-governmental organisations, etc. And that's what the Liaison Agency is here for!

As the position 'Chairperson of the Liaison Agency' was not performed for quite some time, I am looking forward to have the chance to start over and to (re)built the useful instrument 'Liaison Agency' for AEGEE. This should prevent that every LA has to reinvent the wheel.

What was your motivation for applying for this position?

- When I became a Liaison Agent almost one year ago I had to face some difficulties and teething troubles as that position was 'orphaned' for a while. Now I'd like to improve the situation for Liaison Agents and make the Liaison Agency an even more powerful 'tool' for AEGEE!

When I started my task as LA, a lot of people told me my work wouldn't be worth a cent for AEGEE... But I found out, that this was not the case! When I had the chance to talk with the contact person of BMBF (German Ministry for Education and Research) face to face in Berlin, BMBF showed inter-

est and was open for the ideas of AEGEE and signaled that they are looking forward to our applications. Even the time was quite short we managed to apply for funds for projects in Mannheim and Tübingen and are now waiting for the results.

So heading the Liaison Agency, I want to foster the work of the Liaison Agents to support the work in the AEGEE-network!

What is the support that you think LA need from you?

- It depends very much on the needs of the single LAs. In general, the most important thing is to provide a platform for LAs, where they can exchange their experience and find someone helping if there are any difficulties. It must be the aim to develop some kind of standard how LAs can be supported straightforward.

How was the communication with the CD so far?

As Chairperson of the Liaison Agency, I am mainly communicating with our Director for European Institutions - Tinatin Tsertvadze and it works quite fine. But from my point of view, as Liaison Agent there are still potentials to realize in the communication.

Stefan is 27 years 'young' and he is studying industrial engineering at the University of Kaiserslautern. He became a member of the local AEGEE branch on the magical date 02.03.04. He has been president of AEGEE-Kaiserslautern and helped reestablishing Contact Saarbrücken. Last year he became Liaison Agents towards BMBF (German Ministry for Education and Research) and also few months ago, Chairperson of the Liaison Agency.

Veronica Dumitrescu - Liaison Officer towards European Cultural Foundation starting from August 2007.

Liaison Agency Statistics

	UN	ECF	World Bank	UNESCO	OECD
Full name of the institution	the United Nations	the European Cultural Foundation	World Bank	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation
The liaison officer	Sebastian Schopp Avenue Auguste Rodin 21 B-1050 Ixelles - Brussels Belgium Mobile: +32-488-471368 Mail: sebastian.schopp@aegee.org	Veronica Dumitrescu 3 Schelelor, A6 / III / 14, Campina, Prahova Romania tel: +4 0721019787 e-mail: veronik_dumitrescu@yahoo.com	Claudio Piras Carrer de Sant Miquel 65, Barcelona e-mail: claudiopiras@aegeecagliari.org	Viktoriya Voytsekhovska Vul. Yaroslavenka 47/5 UA-79034 L`viv e-mail: vita_voj@yahoo.com	Matthias Brienen Kruisstraat 201 NL-3581 GK Utrecht tel: +32-030-25 34 417 e-mail: m.j.brienen@aegee-utrecht.nl
When did AEGEE start cooperation with the institution?	In 1998, AEGEE was associated with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council with special consultative status. In 2006, AEGEE was associated with the United Nations' Department of Public Information (DPI).	Liaison Office towards ECF was deleted in 2003 and then, restored in 2007.	AEGEE has started cooperation with World Bank in 2003.	AEGEE has started cooperation with UNESCO in 1996 received consultative status in 1998 at the World Conference on Higher Education.	This information is not clear in the archives.
What are the fields of cooperation between AEGEE and the institution?	In the past, AEGEE has been actively involved in the fields of Education, Information Society, Human Rights and Youth.	For the moment AEGEE has no cooperation with ECF. Veronica took over this task in August.	Youth voices, Essay competition, there were no WB grants given to AEGEE projects recently.	Higher education, recognition of non-formal education, Day on NFE at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in December; Youth forum UNESCO, Being observer during UNESCO General Conferences, Education for All.	Attending annual meetings. It would make more sense to send our members to these meetings.
Is there any previous or ongoing mutual project AEGEE and the institution work on together?	Not currently.	There are no ongoing projects. The possibilities for collaboration are limited.	Not currently.	AEGEE has initiated organisation of joint event within the frames of Flagship Project of AEGEE Education Unlimited.	Not currently.
If yes, what is the budget of it?	It is difficult to obtain direct financial support from the United Nations. However, the UN often provides information materials, trainers, and speakers.	No budget	No budget	For the time being UNESCO is giving AEGEE sponsorship in kind meaning providing with logistics such as room and speakers for the conference.	No budget
What is the website?	www.un.org www.un.org/youth www.un.org/ecosoc www.un.org/dpi/ngos/section/index.asp	http://www.eurocult.org	www.worldbank.org	http://portal.unesco.org	www.oecd.org

FRES and ES2: Yes! It is reality!

Maria Nomikou

It has been a long time since the last European School 2 and Fund Raising European School took place. It would be funny to say that the reason was that there was no need to organise them. It would be even funnier to say that we did not want to. In the last few years, one of the main concerns of the Academy board was the arrangement of these two events. It proved impossible due to several obstacles, such as shortages of human resources, funds or local organisers.

At the same time, it was obvious that the two trainings needed further development. So one year ago, in November 2006, the Academy organised a Concepts Development Meeting, in Karlsruhe, where 20 experienced members of our organisation worked on the two blueprints. Since then, there was an unspoken deal among us that both events would take place soon. We had very promising concepts, we knew who could best put them into practice, so then we started looking for local organisers. Finally, after all these years, it is still hard to believe that we have motivated host locals, expert managers, and even some funds! The FRES will take place in Utrecht on 19th- 25th of November and the ES2 in Oviedo from 4th-13th January 2008.

Burcu Becermen, manager of the FRES in Utrecht, together with her



trainers and the participants of the Concepts Development Meeting, aims to train a sufficient number of skilled and qualified fundraisers.

They will raise money for all AEGEE actions on the European level for at least two years after this FRES. Twenty people from within and outside AEGEE will have the chance to learn about private and public funding, some basic elements of financial management and to see fundraising as team work, always focusing on knowledge transfer to their successors. The event is supported by the Youth in Action program and the HogeSchool in Utrecht, and extra private funding is in the works. The training will be delivered by two AEGEE trainers, Matthias Weber



and Maria Nomikou, one external Zara Lavychyan from the European Youth Forum and the

manager Burcu, while many external speakers from institutions and companies will run their own sessions. AEGEE-Utrecht has been hard at work for several months, in close cooperation with Burcu. This great combination of people will definitely succeed!

On the other hand, European School 2, the event that prepares the future leaders of our association, is also in preparation fever. This is the event that stimulates the development of ideas to achieve AEGEE's core goals as well as motivating and preparing people to take responsibility at the European level. The twenty participants will attend sessions on project development, AEGEE in Europe and AEGEE internally, while they will have the chance to develop their personal skills through various activities and



methodologies. The event will be delivered by five experienced Academy trainers, including the manager Asia Piskunowicz, supported by Radu Racareanu, Julia Hoffmann, Musa Akgul and Maria Nomikou. They will be joined by two external experts from Salto and the European Youth Forum. We believe that the diversity of experience in the training team, the input of the external speakers and the results of the Concepts Development Meeting will combine into a high level training course. AEGEE-Oviedo, the hosts, showed amazing motivation from the first moment. Ever since their successful bid for the ES2, they worked very hard to raise money and they display fresh enthusiasm every day!

Although a lot of time has passed



since the last trainings, it now seems worth the wait.

Cooperation between managers, trainers, locals and the Academy board is remarkable and this is what brings success. The people! It is the right time to give something back to AEGEE, in return for so many experiences in the past years! So... good luck to everyone for their experiments and many thanks to all the people that supported us through these months!

Maria Nomikou is the manager of European School 2.

Lets Make a Revolution!

Bartek Kotowicz

I took part in a Learning Course organised by the Council of Europe in Dublin this summer; along with over 30 participants from across Europe. I do not want to write about how great this course was, but I would like to focus on one night.

In the middle of the course, we decided to organise an NGO fair, in which everyone makes posters and leaflets to publicise his or her organisation to the rest of the group. As a proud member of AEGEE, I wanted to do my best to promote our organisation. It turned out that some of my friends have already heard about AEGEE, which surprised me a lot. Their opinions could definitely have been better, however.

Why do people from the 'real world' have such different views from us?

We need a clear message, as well as new and modern ways to communicate it. If you ask a few ordinary members what AEGEE is, you will hear different answers: parties, tolerance, fun, projects, travelling, making a change... Obviously, this seems rather incoherent. In my opinion, AEGEE needs a new revolution. After 22 years there are a lot of things we can change and improve. I know we are never happy to change our reality, but changes for the better should always be warmly welcomed. I am

Bartek

Kotowicz, 22,
AEGEE mem-
ber since
2004.

President of
AEGEE-
Gdansk.
Involved in
Public
Relation

Working Group and Key to Europe.



hardly an expert in all fields of AEGEE, but I am familiar with PR and communication. I will offer some suggestions to make us more visible in our European communities and leave people more enthusiastic about AEGEE.

Best Practices

At TriCity University in Gdansk, there are many student organisations, including ESN, AIESEC or BEST as well as local groups such as Student Parliaments or Science Clubs. European universities are not far away on the Moon, and so AEGEE faces competition for students' attention. We can accept this state of affairs and work on improving our visibility or we can give up and go home. The decision is yours.

The year 2006 was groundbreaking for ESN. After long discussions, its Annual General Meeting in Kraków made the decision to implement a new corporate identity. ESN gambled on a complete change of image to help them build a clear message, with the support of a professional design agency.

Corporate identity is more important now than at any other time, even for student organisations. It means much more than just a logo, involving many important tools and activities such as name, visual recognition, organisational behaviour, values and philosophy. Thanks to its new identity, ESN can better express its message: students helping students. AEGEE is still a few steps behind, not yet communicating clearly.

As an amateur graphic designer, I regret our attitude to corporate identity within AEGEE. We are a rare example of a large institution with over a hundred old-fashioned

logos, several competing websites, clashing promotional materials and different names. AEGEE, European Students' Forum or Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe – which name do you use?

The AEGEE logo has a long history, with several changes of appearance over the last two decades. Artistic AEGEE members added variety to this logo, creating many local designs. However, without any coordination between them our image has become confused. Here are some examples:



The world is changing very quickly and new media, such as personal blogs, YouTube video sharing or wiki information sites, are important to our lives. This second generation of new internet tools is characterised by open communication, freedom to share and genuine user-friendliness. Why not use them on the AEGEE main website?

AEGEE in its history had a positive impact for thousands of young people. Every day we make history, change young people's environment and shape our local communities.

We have to show AEGEE as a modern and active student organisation, in a way more appealing to outsiders. If we are ready to change Europe, we are also ready to begin our PR revolution.

Cultural Working Group - 'Let's InterCoolTour Train You'

2008 – Year of Intercultural Dialogue started in 2007

Veronika Dumitrescu

From our very creation, human beings have given ourselves the mission of exploring the Earth, discovering new places and cultures. We are always migrating, always on the move. In the last decades, many European and other countries have been confronted with rising immigration.

Does this wave of new people influence the life of native Europeans? Do immigrants bring problems or opportunities to their host countries? Is this going to affect the wellbeing of either natives or immigrants? What about existing minorities? Is there any reason to worry about this phenomenon? Is there a need for action to avoid conflicts between different cultures?

As it is always better to prevent than to treat, the European Commission decided that the European Year 2008 will focus on on this "high priority". The Symposium of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 - A Dialogue Among Cultures in a New Europe - Expectations – Aims – Challenges was held on December 14th and 15th 2006 in Vienna.

At the symposium, Vladimir Šucha, Director of DG Education and Culture, Directorate Culture and Communication in the European Commission, said:

„In this context, the need for a deeper and more structured intercultural dialogue, that is to say involving all sectors of civil society and engaging in a sustainable process, requires a consistent implementation of intercultural dialogue. The European Year 2008 will therefore highlight the importance of fostering intercultural dialogue

within daily life environments involving all people living in the EU. It will focus on young people and on a more active citizenship through education and support of best practices aiming at building a better living together and a riper European identity.”

We are AEGEE, we like to act, to be active, to work for our society. The 2008 Year of Intercultural Dialogue is a topic where AEGEE has a lot to say.

In January 2007, the Cultural Working Group board was planning the Year Agenda and one of the most challenging projects included was an intercultural training. Now, after ten months of hard work, we can talk about it, with pride, in the past tense.

“Let's InterCoolTour Train You” took place between 16th and 21st October 2007, in the European Cultural Capital 2010, Istanbul. The event brought together twenty-four participants from twelve different countries, half of them AEGEE members and the other half from different youth organisations around Europe.

The training course aimed to develop the cultural knowledge and skills of youth workers, and to promote intercultural learning on the local, national and international levels. For six days, these young activists discussed culture, stereotypes and prejudices, shared knowledge on culture and intercultural learning and related their own experiences in the field of intercultural learning.

The participants were trained as multipliers in intercultural learning

and conflict management, learning about the role of common heritage, shared experiences and meaning construction in culture, about the importance of taking an ethnocultural look at the world, and the social construction of language. They have established cultural frameworks as a way to understand cultural differences and worked with strategies for mutual adaptation – Integration vs. Assimilation.

What precisely is meant by intercultural dialogue? Between whom should this dialogue take place, what purpose might it serve, under what hierarchical conditions should it take place, to what cultural concepts does it relate, and in what manner could it take place?

These are the questions to start from; give it a try and find your own answers! If you think your own environment faces a communication problem between immigrants and locals, stand up and be counted! We can all help to build and strengthen bridges between cultures. There is still time to create your team, write down your project and contact the CWG board to put your event in the Agenda for 2008.

Join CWG in its mission to reinforce communication between cultures!

Go to www.aegge.org/wg, select CWG and click „JOIN”.

Veronica Dumitrescu,
Speaker of the
CWG board
2006/2007.



SU: Making Europe Happen for 20 Years

Daniela Costa and SUCT

"Lets go somewhere for two weeks this summer!"

Such an average sentence for most of us, but when we realised that a great European adventure was starting during those weeks within AEGEE, we couldn't resist. Like thousands of other young people, we caught the Summer University bug.

SU is the biggest and longest lasting project of AEGEE, with great support and popularity across the network. The success story began in 1988, and since then SUs have taken place in 265 cities over 42 countries, with over 50 000 young people participating so far.

A Summer University is an event organised by an AEGEE antenna, usually over two weeks, where between twenty and fifty AEGEE members come together from all over Europe. SUs are by young people, for young people. The proj-

in a multinational environment. This goes far beyond a holiday; this is a real life-long experience.

How can you make it happen?

Each local group, which wants to participate will be fully supported by the Summer University Coordination Team, through designing and promoting their event, evaluating applications and organising the SU itself, as well as promoting SU among students locally and internationally.

Each SU has a particular purpose. Some concentrate on culture, and others education, especially language learning, but all of them should be open to everyone. The 2006 Annual Report of the project, by SUCT manager Kamala Schütze, shows 95 accepted SU events, 19 of which were suitable for participants with disabilities. However, there were only four individual applications of disabled mem-

symbol, a flag, sweets, music, movies or clothes, and introduces his homeland to the other participants. In this way, participants do not just discover one country, but many more.

Opinion of the participants

We asked Virag Szabo, as a SUCT member and former PR Director in the Comité Directeur, to tell us about her experience: "Working for AEGEE is always great, working for the biggest project is even better and more challenging, but working in a team of friends is the best. Luckily the four of us have been good friends for over four years, so we can do the job really smoothly. The last year was a great positive experience – tasting the last drops of AEGEE for us".

In 2006 one of the youngest locals, AEGEE-Porto-Invicta in Portugal, organised a successful SU together with AEGEE-Lisbon, and they held "before" and "after" events in Porto at which they collected some of the participants' opinions.

Laura Costica from Bucuresti, Fundraising Director of AEGEE-Europe, was one of them. She wanted to sum up not only her experience in this SU, but also her AEGEE life in general: "In 2004, I became an AEGEE member because I wanted to be active and change something, especially mentalities. Firstly, it was just a big dream, even because the biggest changes happened inside of me".

Through all of these years she got involved in many SUs: "I travelled a lot, but I always felt at home every time. I had the opportunity to meet people from different cultures: German, Polish, Turkish and many others and I found out that all youngsters have the same wish:

"I had the opportunity to meet people from different cultures: German, Polish, Turkish and many others and I found out that all youngsters have the same wish: to know the world and to show more about their own country to the others".

Laura Costica

ect has influenced the lives of young people in Europe for twenty years now, involving over 6000 local organisers in 150 antennae – from Portugal to Azerbaijan, Finland to Malta. It is one of the largest youth mobility projects in Europe.

The project enables the young to overcome their mental borders and broaden their intercultural understanding, by combining culture, languages and a great summer holiday

bers.

Apart from serious talks and debates, music, entertainment and 'youth spirit' form an essential part of any SU programme. Although each local has its own favourite activities and objectives, they all have some things in common. The 'European Night' is one such tradition. Each participant brings some typical things from his culture: wine, traditional dishes, a doll or a



to know the world and to show more about their own country to the others. This was how I felt with the wonderful people of Porto and Lisbon, who hosted us here in SU. This is the main reason why I will surely come back".

Kosara Kunjundzić from AEGEE-Beograd also took part in the same SU and its associated events. She especially remembers the moments spent in the company of European friends looking out at the River Tejo. Kosara says, simply: "it looks like the sea".

An organiser's vision

We also wanted AEGEE-Porto-Invicta's point of view. Pedro Pinto, one of the founding members, says that for him AEGEE and the SUs are "an opportunity to grow up". On international exchanges: "You add 200 grams of Portugal, 2 litres of Estonia, 300 grams of Denmark, 100 grams of France and just a pinch of Greece." Since joining AEGEE he feels that "Making new friends is constant. To go out there and discover Europe is a necessity".

João Simões, the first president of AEGEE-Porto-Invicta, got inspired by participating in an

AEGEE event elsewhere. As he explains: "I took part in a Creative Communication Training Seminar in Romania in 2005. When I came back, feeling in touch with the 'AEGEE spirit' I decided to create a local in Porto. I remember in the three days after my return I was already organising meetings of the future AEGEE-Porto-Invicta".

SU's : the past and the future

Lets back up a little, and talk about recent and upcoming SU activities. Along with AEGEE-Istanbul, the SU Coordination Team organised a youth congress just before Agora-Eskisehir to celebrate the Summer University project's twentieth anniversary. The event dealt with the topic "European Mobility", using a perfect mixture of seriousness and celebration. Just like the Summer Universities themselves.

Our next task is to edit the anniversary results book, but stay tuned, it will be out soon! SUCT's other ongoing project is the annual SU Project School, which aims to prepare future SU organisers for any possible scenario – so for those interested in organising a Summer

University, we strongly recommend attending a SUPS beforehand. From the SUCT side, we hope to see more locals taking part, more interesting SU themes and the possibility of learning more languages during these events. It would be great to move the SU project back to its roots, with more unique content and less "lets get drunk and have fun" events.

We wish for another twenty and more years for this great project, and in the upcoming terms, we hope to see idealistic, enthusiastic and creative people working in the SUCT to ensure its success.

Help us spread summer energy all over the network!

Daniela Costa is 24 years old AEGEE Porto-Invicta member since its beginning in 2006. She is a freelance journalist in Portugal and she adores traveling and meeting new people.



Students and education? EWG finding our way through

Astrid Schrader and Perçin Imrek

Frank Biancheri, founder of AEGEE, underlines the importance of education by defining 'the duty of AEGEE-Europe: Being at core of every debate concerning European Higher Education'.

Being one of the main stakeholders of education, the link between students and European education policies seems obvious.

Nevertheless, the challenges faced by today's generation have changed greatly confronting us with different topics than 20 years before: a shift from organisations acting mostly as informers to assuming their responsibilities as active stakeholders in the decision-making processes.

At the core of the debate: the Lisbon Agenda, which was the ambitious goal set up 2000 on a European Council Meeting in Lisbon to make Europe 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world' by 2010. Accordingly, the core needs identified were a wider range of individual learning paths, increased mobility through an ERASMUS year or internships abroad and a stronger focus on soft skills or practical experience during our university formation.

Alas, as a new concept of education *lifelong learning* was attributed an increasing importance.

University is no longer seen as the destination of our education but as a stage in our process of lifelong learning. Acknowledging that competencies include more than just knowledge but also skills and atti-

tudes might be amongst the central changes in paradigm in European education policies ever since.

The most visible manifestation of this change of education perception is probably the Bologna Process (BP) that summarises the development taken by national education policies to make higher education structures more compatible via the introduction of the Bachelor / Master system. Employability, flexibility and mobility were to be raised on a European scale supported by European grant programs such as ERASMUS, LEONARDO, or SOCRATES. The climax of the policy race, however, is about to fade out. The Bologna abbreviations such as BA., MA., ECTS, EQF or ENQA have found their way into the documents and papers of our governments and university administrations.

So what does the youth voice say?

In all the Council of Europe member countries, different opinions are raised concerning the social dimension or doubts about the real impact the BP crypticism has brought about. One major aspect shared amongst youth organisations in the whole of Europe is, however, the extent to which non-formal education is

recognised.

In order to realize employability as one of its main goals, the BP strives to include all kinds of education that form the competencies of a person. Be it at university or elsewhere.

From an AEGEE point of view, it is the 'elsewhere' that interests us the most, namely the sort of recognition that is received by trainings such as European Schools, a Mediation Training or a Diplomatic Seminar; taking over responsibilities as an event coordinator or project manager or acquiring managing skills in board positions be it on local or European level.

Still the reward that students get for their commitment differs tremendously from country to country. Examples reach countries, where students receive ECTS for AEGEE trainings and local board positions that are paid by the university to countries, where students are at a disadvantage of time and money compared to their peers. To ease this disparity, also AIESEC, ELSA or BDSU started initiatives e.g. to loosen exam conditions for board members or to lower study fees for students who are active in youth NGOs. Even the European Youth Forum (an umbrella organisation for more than 90 national

youth councils and other European youth associations) has placed the recognition of non-formal education at the top of their agenda.

Our challenge is to bridge the gap!

In most countries, however, the state does



not reward active citizenship at the necessary level. Yet, despite this grey reality, there is European consensus that non-formal education benefits greatly not just to the personal development, but also to our communities. The most recent communication from the European Commission 'Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society' issued 5th September 2007, highlights the importance of linking our education to the labour market and defines active citizenship, volunteering and the benefits of non-formal education as one of the core ways to get there.

Generally speaking: Recognizing non-formal education by governmental authorities, in other words, granting its learning outcomes a more official status similar to what a person receives when he or she graduates at school or university is certainly useful. Initiatives such as the Europass or the Youth Pass, so a standard set of CVs that can be handed in together with a motivation letter applying for internships or jobs are a healthy start and the success of these pilot projects is to be welcomed. Nevertheless, the key still lies in changing the appreciation of non-formal activities in society. Recognition can be a first step, but what is really required is a higher valuation amongst stakeholders in society of non-formal education.

AEGEE and Education – 'Education Unlimited!' and EWG

So what is our role in this? Being the forum for education matters, the Education Working Group's main task from merely informing students about European policies e.g. on the Bologna Process, lifelong learning or student mobility issues has been extended to enhancing the recognition of non-formal education, but also influencing decision-making processes wherever possi-

ble. Our aim shall not only be to inform students, but to empower them to raise their voice on both local and European level.

AEGEE and Education – 'Education Unlimited!' and EWG

On the AGORA Warszawa the network placed exactly those matters on the top of its project agenda. The flagship project 2007 exclusively deals with education. More specifically: how to bring formal and non-formal education closer together which places the project at the core of the European education debate.

Sharing the same goals, EWG and EDUN work together in many fields the most important of which being the lobbying for the recognition of non-formal education at the European parliament, events such as the Bologna Process Training School in Münster; the (planned) Mobility Training School, but also by empowering people on a personal level. EDUN as well as EWG strive to make young Europeans realize the impact they personally can have on both on their communities, and on their own life by taking over the lead.

We are, therefore, extremely happy to see that so many EWG idealists have been present in a number of international conferences in Strasbourg, Brussels, Berlin, Rome and many others presenting AEGEE's stand towards education and learning. Thanks to the increased attention to education matters in the network (much of which is due to our flagship project), AEGEE disposes of an increasing number of passionate students:

EWGans in Strasbourg lobbying for the recognition of non-formal education towards the European



Parliament;

EWGans in Mannheim organise a training to empower active students to collaborate more effectively with their universities in mobility issues;

EWGans in Athens calling upon national and local youth councils to collaborate in a project called 'Noah's Arch' to train high school kids on European leadership and the significance of education and learning; and last but not least ...

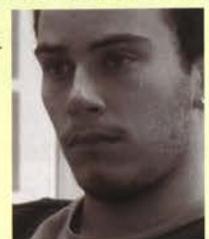
... Three EWGans as one of twenty youth delegates for the next conference organised by the Portuguese Presidency of the European Council in Lisbon.

... And all together we got some large shoes to fill!

Astrid Schrader, Education Working Group Speaker. She is the manager of the upcoming EWG high school training with AEGEE-Athina and the Mobility Training School with AEGEE-Mannheim. She is also member of the AEGEE-Academy and a frequent conference attender.



Percin Imrek, born in 1986. He is involved in Youth in Action programs and has his first training as a trainer in October. He is in his last class now at the university. Currently he is the president of AEGEE-Canakkale, PR of EWG, Network Director of PRWG and Interim Net-com in AEGEE-Europe.



Flagship News: Education Unlimited

Radu Racareanu

The Flagship Project of AEGEE is our main project for a certain period, the focus of our efforts both internally and externally, as in the case of Education Unlimited during the year 2007. Four years after the last education-based FP, the 2002 "Eureca" project, a need was felt across the network that AEGEE, as a student organisation, should focus again on this area. Designed to contribute to the improvement of European higher education, both by strengthening young people's involvement in educational policies at the grass-roots and by bridging formal and non-formal education in a more sustainable way, Education Unlimited has been working on three levels.

The first level is aimed at students and young leaders who should experience all sorts of education in order to become more accomplished adults. Thus, in groups of various sizes, they will promote the concept of unlimited education, taking initiatives in their local environment and getting more people active and involved. Eventually they will benefit directly from the results of the project.

Secondly, the project targets the academic and training communities who pass on education to young people and could support the integration of its different forms.

Third and last, the labour market needs to become more aware of the human and intellectual resources at its disposal in youth, students' and non governmental organisations. Employers should pay more attention to education, both formal and non formal, as it can secure the future development of their business.

Education Action Week.

Following in the footsteps of "Action Days", "Education Unlimited" has organised a new

Education Action Week. Six years after the European Commission adopted a "Communication on Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality" in order to attract young people to the topic of education and learning, the EAW project can inform them about different aspects and methods of education and learning and encourage them to reconsider education and learning and contribute to its improvement.

In short, Education Action Week has introduced different ways to make your education more interesting, high quality and fun – and begun putting these ideas into practice.

Ten AEGEE locals, in Strasbourg, Warszawa, Tartu, Messina, Tuebingen, Samara, Plzen, Torun, Szombathely and Vilnius, together with the Education Unlimited Project Team, especially Project Team Member Kadri Kalle, have been introducing key concepts to young people in the above mentioned cities. These include lifelong learning, the importance of non-formal education, the Bologna Process and student mobility. In this way, they are continuing the great success of the Education and Socrates/Erasmus Action Weeks organised in AEGEE between 1997 and 2002.

Aims of Education Action Week

- Provide information about the Bologna Process (the parts affecting students, where to find more information).

- Provide information about the concept of life-long learning (what it means, and the current programmes supporting it at European and national levels).

- Raise awareness of non-formal education and the existing NGOs

dealing with it, and the possibilities of combining it with formal education.

- Demonstrate and promote interactive study methods.
- Form a platform for communication between student NGOs and university stakeholders that offers a basis for ongoing cooperation.

Expected results of the Education Action Week

- Making students think how are they actually learning, how they define education, what it gives/should give them, how to reach the "ideal education".

- Raising student interest in the topics; Bologna Process, life-long learning, non-formal education, ways to raise the quality of their education, and providing more information.

- Better cooperation between student organisations in order to improve the quality of education.

- Improving university cooperation with students, with ongoing communication, constructive meetings and discussions taking place.

- Inspiring a new generation of ideas on how to improve the quality of education, and beginning to implement them where possible.

- Raising public awareness of Action Week and through it recognition of non-formal education, and the importance of student organisations such as AEGEE.

For more information visit the website:

<http://www.projects.aegEE.org/educationunlimited>.

Radu Racareanu is the Speaker of AEGEE Academy.

Environmental Working Group

Verena Schmidt

The Environmental Working Group was founded at the Spring AGORA 2007. This would not be news to those AEGEE members, who witnessed the previous environmental working group. It was deleted in 1999 due to a shortage of motivated members. Now, again, there is more interest in environmental issues within AEGEE as well as in society as a whole. Global warming and rising fuel prices are commonly discussed at political summits such as G8. The environment is a popular topic today and is likely to remain extremely relevant. So it is nice to see that the EnWVG is back on track.

However, EnWVG did not just pop up during the Spring AGORA 2007. It needed time to evolve. During the Spring AGORA 2005, several members of AEGEE-Tartu and AEGEE-Nijmegen had the idea of restarting the group. Workshops were held during both AGORA in 2006, awareness was raised and interested members were gathered. AGORA-Warszawa and AGORA-Napoli featured workshops about the environment's place in AEGEE.

A crucial step in the re-establishment of the EnWVG was taken during the New Year event 2006-2007 in Estonia. AEGEE members who were interested in environmental issues met, talked and joined forces to found the new EnWVG. They met again the following spring in Brussels to become an official working group of AEGEE. The proposal to establish EnWVG was accepted by vote at the Spring AGORA 2007. In June 2007 the first EnWVG board was elected.

The next steps in the work of EnWVG will include organising interesting events, raising people's awareness on EnWVG, the environ-

ment and, of course, the new Flagship Project, proposed by the new group: Sustaining our future. In addition to various events, the



European Day of Environment will be celebrated in late April every year.

Flagship Project: Sustaining Our Future

During the Spring AGORA 2007, the new Environmental Working Group proposed an environmental Year Plan Topic: Sustaining Our Future. The title may sound familiar to some, as Kofi Annan has used a similar title for his official report to the UN Millennium Summit 2000. This shows how important this issue is, as it remains as relevant today as seven years ago, not only to environmental groups but to the whole society. It also indicates that sustainable development is a long-term topic that needs to be addressed. Notably, sustainable development will be the Year plan Topic of AEGEE in both 2008 and 2009.

Environment and the sustainability of our future are important issues that may revive the troubled European cooperation. There is no more time for unilateralism, as

European and global cooperation is needed in the environment and energy fields. Otherwise, shortages of energy or water and the negative consequences of global warming, such as desertification, will lead to more international conflicts.

Thus, Sustaining Our Future is not only an environmental topic, but also a political and social one. Environmental policy has been discussed at the G8 summit, as well as at the EU Council summit during the German EU presidency. Cooperation within AEGEE is also needed in order to have a say in environmental policy. It is a topic which should represent our entire organisation. Since this is also a political issue, not only the Environmental Working Group, but also other AEGEE members and the International Politics Working Group joined the Year Plan Topic meeting in September 2007 in Brussels and defined the topic more precisely.

Verena Schmidt, 25, member of AEGEE-Tübingen. Her AEGEE life started in October 2006, when her friend persuaded her to join a local AEGEE meeting. There she got injected with the infamous AEGEE virus. At the moment, she is not only enjoying travelling all around Europe, but also is the secretary of her local and HR Responsible of currently established EnWVG and upcoming year plan topic.



Here Comes the Green Man...

Verena Schmidt

During the last AGORA in Valletta, some green people conquered the stage. Aliens? No, although all of them were wearing green shirts. They were representing the future Environmental Working Group. Before that, however, they had to ask for the AGORA's approval. With hindsight, this seemed to be only a formal hurdle, as the approval was rather convincing! Later on during the event we could meet these guys again, as they proposed an environmental Flagship Project. Again, they got what they wanted.

Now, the News Bulletin team decided to interview the EnWGs speaker, Miguel Gallardo, as our featured 'promising member of AEGEE'. Here it comes...

WHY HAVE YOU JOINED AEGEE?

I saw a poster on the wall of my faculty, then talked about this Summer University project with a friend and together we joined my local antenna to give it a try. But I suppose the real question is why I become actively involved in AEGEE. It was the people I met in my local and during my first events... You know who you are, people from Niksic, Katowice, Padova, Eskisehir... Who made me step by step more interested in becoming something more than a participant. Well, I think in every AEGEE event I always find some people who motivate me, it is a continuous feedback system.

HOW DO YOU SEE AEGEE NOW?

We have finished a fast period of expansion towards the outer boundaries of Europe, and should now spend some more time strengthening our network. I mean both investing energies in vast geographical areas without antennae, and also within some fields of action

that have not been considered important lately. I think the EnWG people can help in these two new challenges.

About the much discussed topic of lack of contents in our events, I want to mention a recent experience. I just came back from the ISSP (International Summer School of Photography) in Riga, organised by a different association. Although the workshop contents were great, it lacked AEGEE spirit and there was not a real "group feeling". It was just a lot of people together and that was all, there were not common goals. Of course, I met some great people, but I often missed this thing that makes AEGEE so special, and that is difficult to write down in words. In my opinion, AEGEE would be strong whenever we find a way to keep this "spirit" alive in combination with interesting events, where our members can enjoy a wide selection of topics while making friends, discovering other cultures and travelling a lot. Your browser may not support display of this image.

YOUR AEGEE ACTIVITIES SO FAR?

Apart from a couple of AGORA, I have always tried to choose my activities content-wise in AEGEE, so I could really add extra value to my time. What I was looking for was either to culturally expand my knowledge of some parts of Europe on which I had very little previous information, or to join some workshops on theatre, photography, mythology, etc... and finally came that event last New Year in Estonia, where I met other people with the same ideas about the need to connect AEGEE with environmental issues.

TELL US ABOUT THAT NEW YEAR EVENT IN ESTONIA

It was much better than I expected, and believe me I went there with great expectations both because of the topic and the organizing team. My brother had been on SU in Tartu and told me they were a good team at creating the best atmosphere. We gathered there for a short period but we had long sessions of working, discussing, exchanging ideas and also finding time to have a lot of fun. We were all really motivated and our different backgrounds crystallized into a very enriching experience. As a result of that experience this new WG is just one example, but I also greatly value all the new friends I met there.

WHY A WORKING GROUP, AND NOT JUST SOME ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS?

Common agreement among the group of people who joined together to restart EnWG is that a working group has more stability for long term effects within the network. It provides a more stable structure for the actions that we think can improve AEGEE's involvement with certain problems of European society, that, in our opinion, are still being left aside. Finally, we considered that it was more suitable to collaborate on an equal basis with other AEGEE bodies. Of course we are aware of the struggles we must go through, especially in the first period of our work, but after seriously considering all the pros and cons, we feel we are able to do it right.

The 'old' EnWG was closed in 1999. Do you see a threat that AEGEE's engagement with the environment might fade away again?

Right now the topic is quite hot in the media and this should help to keep interest alive, but we should



Miguel Gallardo - Speaker of EnWG

not think that this is enough to assure high levels of interest in environmental issues by AEGEE people. There are still some people wondering why AEGEE needs an Environmental WG. We should be able to keep their attention with events, discussions, workshops at Agorae and whatever else we come up with.

YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

Apart from keeping my PhD research going, I have to collaborate with other AEGEE bodies to set up a diverse and coherent Flagship Project. I still have to work hard to increase the visibility of EnWG within our network and find partners for future collaboration in some new activities. I should not forget my duties at the local level either. As President of my antenna, I need to work harder to ensure that no single member loses his or her motivation due to any lack of support from other members, including myself, as I am often away. In your opinion, how can AEGEE become more Environment- friendly? We are aware that, due to the nature of the activities AEGEE is organising, there are some limits to what we can do. We believe in the effect of small choices that can start a small light inside our members, make

them think about some environmental problems they had simply never been aware of, and in this moment we have achieved one of the most difficult parts of our work. Okay, "proper plates" are more difficult to manage for organizers than plastic ones, but, what about paper ones?

The travel issue is just one of our main fields for internal discussion, and we are very conscious that the motivation and efforts of an antenna willing to organise an event are valuable resources, and they cannot be wasted for any reason. Flying is, in terms of time and sometimes even money, the only option for some people to reach these events, and we want every motivated member to attend especially an AGORA or a European School because, who knows, he or she may become the next "promising AEGEE member"!

There are some options, for example the possibility to compensate the CO2 of your flight by paying a little extra fee that goes to an environmental NGO, which are being carefully reviewed by the EnWG and that can be a possible solution for this problem.

TIPS FOR NEW AEGEE MEMBERS?

I always encourage them to try to find all that AEGEE can offer – I strongly recommend joining content-rich activities. They should never be afraid of asking and showing interest when there is something they don't know, especially when dealing with the European level of AEGEE. It is a complicated world, but full of people that are happy to help newbies become involved, and once you are there it is dangerously addictive.

HOW DID YOU EXPLAIN YOUR ENTHUSIASM AND THE TIME YOU SPENT ON AEGEE TO YOUR PARENTS AND FRIENDS?

To my family it's more or less easy. It's somehow a hereditary trav

el bug we all have. You can see another example in my brother. I like to think that my mother would have probably become an AEGEE member if such an opportunity had existed when she was a student. She has proven to be a very good host to some of my AEGEE friends! It is great to have such support, I think they like it because they feel it is something important for me.

About my friends... They like me as I am, they like sticking postcards from remote cities on their walls, and some of them have even joined me on some of my best AEGEE experiences.

Verena Schmidt, 25, member of AEGEE-Tübingen. Her AEGEE life started in October 2006, when her friend persuaded her to join a local AEGEE meeting. There she got injected with the infamous AEGEE virus. At the moment, she is not only enjoying travelling all around Europe, but also is the secretary of her local and HR Responsible of currently established EnWG and upcoming year plan



Project Development Meeting or “Shaping our Future” flagship project

Laure Onidi

From the 20th to 23rd of September, 15 AEGEE members met in the head office of AEGEE-Europe. Every 2 years the Project Development Meeting takes place in Brussels, organised by the Projects Director - this year Laure Onidi.

What is the Project Development Meeting (PDM)?

During this meeting, AEGEE members work on the development of the flagship project. They have discussions about the topic in a general way and then narrow it down to the AEGEE possibilities in this field!

What is meant by flagship topic and flagship project?

The flagship project is the “key” project of AEGEE for 1 year. It is the project that will be in the highlight. Its theme is determined by the flagship topic. This topic is voted upon at the Spring AGORA. This year in Valletta, “Sustaining our future: taking care of Europe after tomorrow” has been chosen.

Who is proposing the topics?

They can be proposed by different bodies and people of AEGEE. For example this year topics were proposed by Working Groups: Environment and Culture. As projects director I was coordinating the work. It meant that I had to make sure a topic was presented, and I helped with the set up.

Is it still time to get involved in the project?

Of course, it is always time to do something and get involved – even if a project has started! At this moment we don't have a definitive team. Some of the people at the PDM might be in the project team but we are still looking for enthusiastic team members.

During the PDM, people worked on different subjects and discussed a lot. Out of these consultation rounds, we have now 4 proposals. We will present them at the Network

“The way we are now going to involve the whole network into the development phase of the project is something new in AEGEE and in that way, we are also implementing the principle of public participation.”

Kadri Kalle, Projects Responsible of Environment Working Group of AEGEE.

Meetings and at the AGORA and collect feedback from AEGEE members.

So the involvement can be at a high level in the project team or at the “grassroots” level by simply commenting on the proposals and give some fresh ideas.

The topic is linked to Environment and sustainable development. What is AEGEE's expertise in this field?

Since our organisation is multidisciplinary, we have the chance to reach a large range of students in different fields and different countries. Our role as an organisation is mainly to spread the word and make people become active in this field! We can be multipliers.

4 PROPOSALS FOR THE NETWORK:

Sustainable mobility

Mobility is important for AEGEE. At the same time travelling has an impact on our environment. We can promote awareness, organise events about alternative ways of travelling, reduce our own impact and influence European decision making on more sustainable (student) travelling.

Natural Resource Management

One of the major problems of our time is the scarcity of resources. It affects energy, water, raw materials and more. Since we are students and represent future generations AEGEE can facilitate the debate.

Corporate Social Responsibility

We as AEGEE want to encourage companies to take their responsibility

for the environment. We can establish co-operations with companies willing to change, but also put pressure on those who don't.

Urban Planning

With urban planning we can unite knowledge of students with local initiatives. Furthermore we can influence and work with universities and companies. Another idea is the AEGEE toolbox: a box with means to make individual student houses more environmentally-friendly.

“Speaking with the participants, I got the confirmation that the PDM is a successful tool to develop Flagship projects. Now that the project cycle has been enlarged, we have double time for preparation. Via workshops at the AGORA, the team has time to consult and involve the network, more than before. I consider this a very positive development. It is a way of bridging the gap between the European and local levels.”

Theijs van Welij, president of AEGEE-Europe

You can see the timeline of the flagship project until the Fall AGORA 2008.

Laure Onidi, Projects Director of AEGEE-Europe.



Wanted: YOU! Join the Caucasus Project!

David de Antonio Villaverde

The Caucasus is one of the most culturally diverse regions on Earth.

AEGEE's Caucasus Project attempts to stimulate cultural exchange and cooperation between all parts of the region, strengthening the locals in the Southern Caucasus and fully integrating them in the AEGEE network. It offers outsiders a great way of learning about this diverse and distant part of Europe. It is defined by the region's location, on the far edge of the European continent with a very specific cultural and historical background. The region includes countries such as largely Muslim Azerbaijan, whose people come from a Turkish background. Then, there are Georgia and Armenia, predominantly Orthodox Christian, but still different from the Russian or Greek churches. These two countries even have different, unique, alphabets. For sure, this is culturally and historically one of the richest areas of our continent.

These factors say a lot about the significance of the region and how essential it is for representatives of the EU to learn and interact with people from these countries. The Caucasus Project can act as a bridge between metropolitan Europe and this isolated region, relying on AEGEE's strength; its large, diverse network. We can play a crucial role in building a common understanding between youth in and outside the Caucasus, giving other European students a direct insight into the region. It is not only a one-way process, however; the birth of new antennae across the Caucasus also helps to spread the AEGEE spirit, so the youngsters of these countries can bypass historic conflicts and get to know each other personally. The Caucasus

project and study trips have motivated many people from the area to start this adventure, working on all four pillars of AEGEE: Higher Education, Peace and Stability, Cultural Exchange and Active Citizenship.

The message from these countries is that even when they are located quite far from central Brussels, it is still worth saving up some money and going there. Your experience of the Caucasus is unique and irreplaceable. You will see and feel unique things, unlike anywhere else in the world. It is a great learning experience and opportunity, as participants in past exchanges and Summer Universities can confirm.

The hopes of AEGEE-Europe for the Caucasus have been fulfilled: two case study trips, three locals in Georgia and Azerbaijan (AEGEE-Tbilisi, AEGEE-Baki and AEGEE-Lenkoran as well as a contact in Gyumri), many Job Shadowing visits, and one of the most interesting AEGEE projects: Education for Democracy, in which some students from the Caucasus and Balkans took part in a course on democracy at Passau University.

However, some problems complicate our activities in this area. Mobility issues, for example, can block many people from taking part. Obtaining visas is very hard for the citizens of these countries, travel costs can be prohibitive even with 70 per cent reimbursement from the Youth in Action programme and, of course, the long distances involved make travelling to meetings difficult. Other, more complex, threats come from the historic political problem. Even now, the Southern Caucasus is an area with many conflicts. Although

the fighting has mostly stopped, a diplomatic approach is still required in order to run a project suitable to all stakeholders. Issues such as the Nagorno-Karabakh war and the Turkish-Armenian conflict limit the possibilities for cross-border co-operation.

In my opinion, young people from the Caucasus really want lots of friends and partners outside the region, to support their initiatives and projects, organise bilateral events and help them make a contribution towards European integration. Many people there believe their countries will join the EU in the near future, so the youth expect the same opportunities as any other EU citizens. They are waiting for our common vision of a Europe without borders to become true. Working toward this will be the next big challenge for all who are proud to be European, and for AEGEE as one of the first NGOs working on the topic.

Last but not least, in our network, the Caucasus Project started to accelerate and gain a new shape with a new enthusiastic team! Tika Tsertsvadze, the European Institutions Director of AEGEE-Europe with the help of Tiit Reem, the fresh project manager from AEGEE-Tartu completed the Youth in Action application for the project development meeting. Additionally, Gülece Senel from AEGEE-Ankara and Arif Cem Gündogan, current PR-director of AEGEE-Europe, are in contact with the British Council to raise other funds for the project.

The Caucasus Project revives from its ashes and now it is time for you to join the team and shape its future!!

A project for the future : YNTERACT

Irina Paraschivoiu

In a small laboratory close to San Francisco, USA, a researcher has gathered 240 definitions about communication. Biologists, philosophers, linguists, they have all had the chance to share their opinion. Our researcher is restlessly sipping from a cup of coffee, while staring at the tome in his hand... He's at a loss. "So what is communication, actually? And what does it mean for a human being? How is it connected with education?"

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, a group of highly motivated students might have just found the answer. They are AEGEE members. Their idea: that of a project designed to help young people all over Europe to improve communication and to develop soft skills by using non-formal education methods.

This could be the beginning... of a beautiful project!

The idea of the project first came up at a workshop during the AGORA in Torino, in autumn 2004. The discussions brought up the fact that formal education and traditional methods of teaching often prove insufficient nowadays, compared to the actual needs of youngsters. So, the daring members of AEGEE-Athina, Bucuresti and Muenchen set out to build a project by which they could help young people develop soft skills. They would use critical debate, lateral thinking and forum theatre in workshops and Creative Communication training seminars in the three organising cities. The project received financial support from the Grundtvig Programme of the European Commission, while new partnerships were formed with other NGOs, as for example with the Antalya Regional Ministry of Education and A.R.T.Fusion

Think creatively!

So how does YnterACT actually work? There is both a local level, involving a network of Creative Communication Clubs all around Europe, as well as a European level, which offers support and advanced training. By participating in a Creative Communication Training Seminar, you can practice non-formal education methods, learn about critical debate, forum theatre, lateral thinking, and, last but not least, get all the support you need to start a CCC in your own antenna.

And what actually happens in a CCC? The first time I attended the Creative Communication Club, I had the strong feeling I had entered the wrong building. Is it possible that I had confused the University building with that of the Parliament? I soon relaxed though – it was just the CCC members, practicing the methods of Parliamentary Debate. Arguments and counterarguments, between Government and Opposition teams, with everything intense and excited, require the ability to think, to analyze, to persuade. You are always challenged to find better arguments to support your point of view, to organize ideas clearly, to develop listening abilities and improve communication and presentation techniques.

As for the forum theatre... Usually at the theatre, you try to put yourself in the position of the characters, wanting to change something in their attitude, in their behavior; the resolution or the ending. And this is exactly what forum theatre gives you the opportunity to do: to analyze the situation, come up with new solutions and ideas... But not remain as a quite spectator. Instead, you can go on



the stage, replace the character and develop a new scenario.

It is not simply a way to find happy endings, but to cope with actual situations from real life.

Communication and YnterACTion.

A great teacher of mine once told me that what we are, as human beings, is the result of all the communication we have had during our lifetime. We are the sum of what everyone we have met has left behind them, like a trace or a mark in the beach sand... Thoughts, smiles, handshakes, words, everything is archived within ourselves, as if in a powerful computer, and kept for future reference.

Subconsciously, we take part in a continuous personal development process, and each of us is both trainer and trainee.

And, in a nutshell, this is what YnterACT is. It is about communication and teaching each other, about courage and facing your fears, about trying to understand both yourself and those around you. It's about learning, but not from textbooks or manuals, not by memorising, but by meeting, touching, hearing, listening. YnterACT has become, for more than two years now, not just a project, but a way of living. After all, this is what communication is also about. Somebody ought to tell the researcher in San Francisco...

Irina Paraschivoiu, 19, is one of the most active members of AEGEE Bucuresti.



New ideas – New projects – New Find Europe!

Nadine Karbach and Kasia Skibinska

Find Europe – many people, different cultures, one project.

That is how you remember the Find Europe project. As times change, so do AEGEE projects, and Find Europe is no exception. Get inspired by the new Find Europe – with new ideas, new projects and even new YOU?

In 2004, the project “Find Europe” was founded as a part of the Yearplan Topic “European Identity”. Find Europe was the perfect frame for unique cultural events taking place throughout the year! With a minimum duration of three days at a fixed price rate per day, it proved to be an easy event format, presenting high culture for low prices - an ideal occasion to discover culture in Europe at student prices.

Over 25 Find Europe events have taken place since the project was launched! Especially during its first and second years, the AEGEE-network was very active in organising Find Europe events.

The Find Europe Coordination Team, elected from across the network every spring AGORA, takes care of the project – public relations, promotion of each event, help with organisation and quality control.

The main idea behind Find Europe, namely learning about our different cultures here in Europe, remains central to the project. Building deeper understanding of our neighbours and their daily life and increasing cross-cultural understanding is more important than ever.

To keep this core idea while updating the structure of the project – a difficult mission – however,

one that has been successfully realised!

Find Europe events can now be grouped into three different types, depending on their main focus. Nowadays, you can choose between a focus on languages (Find Europe Language) or travelling (Find Europe Travel) or you can still go for the original concept (Find Europe Pure).

Language learning throughout the year becomes an attractive possibility. If you can't wait until the next Summer University, just organise a language course during one weekend for your European friends. These courses are not only a great opportunity for the AEGEE network to learn more about your language and culture, but a two-way street. Your event can also be used to attract new members to your antenna, and improve the knowledge of those already involved.

Smaller excursions in your region can be part of Find Europe Travel. Visiting a different town, a famous castle or the wonders of nature every day could give you a perfect programme. Show off your history and the beauty of your cultural heritage by travelling with AEGEE members from all across Europe and enjoying a great time together.

The original type of “Find Europe” remains as you always knew it: proudly presenting your local and regional culture to your friends from all over Europe. It can be a mixture of language learning, historical visits and lectures, playing typical sports from your culture, visiting interesting museums or art galleries, or enjoying music, dance and literature from your homeland.



During AGORA-Eskisehir in autumn 2007, the project “Find Europe” is proposed for closure. Nevertheless, the great idea and the unique event formats will continue. Since Find Europe is a cultural concept, it will become part of the Cultural Working Group.

So, when you hear that the Find Europe project is closed, remember that the idea will live on and that you can always organise a Find Europe event. For you nothing changes except that you now can choose out of three different “Find Europe” event types, and you will be supported by the Cultural Working Group team.

As you have seen, the range of possible Find Europe events is large and offers everyone the right activity! Whether you are a motivated organiser or a lucky participant, you will surely enjoy the event, the people and the unique atmosphere.

Maybe your dreams have taken wing while reading this? If you want to fly with Find Europe as an organiser, contact

Nadine Karbach, member of AEGEE Mainz/Wiesbaden and Speaker of PRWG. Former PR in the Find Europe Team, Nadine now holds the manager position there till the AGORA-Eskisehir.



Kasia Skibinska is the Find Europe Project Coordinator.

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The Story of a Finalised Project; Education for Democracy

Theijs Van Welij, Zeynep Gülsen and Urska Speh

Education and Democracy; impact, rough, significant, a must, activist, fairness ... For every individual, and for every society, 'education' and 'democracy' mean more than these words. They are not solely words but they also have an impact on our daily life. So they might seem simple definitions but not in world's dictionary. Besides, you can't think them separately.

How are we going to be educated in a non democratic environment? Is education given only at school? NO. It is LIFE itself. We need 'democracy in education' in order to create 'education for democracy'. As a part of the UNESCO project Culture of Peace, AEGEE started Education for Democracy in 2000 to give young, skilled and politically and socially active students from Serbia and Kosovo the chance of a high-profile education and developing their own ideas and perceptions of democracy, spending a year at a university in a country with an established democratic system. This project aimed to encourage the participants to push for reforms in their respective countries.

The concept was developed in detail during the AGORA in Barcelona in May 1999 and the AGORA in Poznan in November of the same year, and a permanent project team was formed. They approached universities and foundations and established in valuable contacts with various organizations dealing with South-Eastern Europe and higher education such as the Independent Students' Union of Serbia in Belgrade, the Prishtina office of the World University Service and the European Rectors Conference. In January 2000, the call for applications was issued in Belgrade and Prishtina. The response of the students was overwhelming.

Students' Union of Serbia in Belgrade, the Prishtina office of the World University Service and the European Rectors Conference. In January 2000, the call for applications was issued in Belgrade and Prishtina. The response of the students was overwhelming.

During the academic year 2000/1, a total of 14 students from Serbia and Kosovo went to study at Dutch and German universities. The students also met regularly for seminars on topics relevant to the present and future of South-Eastern Europe. "...seminars constituting the ground for intercultural exchange and opportunity to discuss ethnical and intercultural problems young people from these non-democratic regions encounter while coming to live and study within the European hosting countries." "...seminars, aiming to help the scholars become more skilled and informed through lectures, case simulations, discussions and workshops and to encourage team building, also by providing a social program as an essential part of each of them." And the result: 137 conferences, trainings, cultural events and statutory meetings and 91 Summer Universities organized in 2000.

The last time such a seminar has been organised was in June 2005, on the current situation & future perspective of Kosovo. This seminar was as well an evaluation, attended by initiator of 1999: Frank Burgdörfer. On the other hand, it turned out that in the last years scholars didn't return to their home cities to democracy building activities. Therefore, the focus area moved to the Caucasus region, where the rose-revolution had just taken place. In 2006/2007, altogether 4 students from Georgia, Azerbaijan and Macedonia involved in the project.

Moreover, in November 2007, a seminar is taking place in Istanbul named as "Looking for European Culture and Democracy." However, despite these moves, scholars did not show any interest in becoming an active citizen and spread the European values. Instead, trouble was created for several hosting antennae, and the credibility of AEGEE damaged towards universities and UNESCO.

The demotivated team stopped initiatives, and resigned at AGORA Valetta. From the grant left-over, two AEGEE members have been reimbursed to attend a seminar offered by 'Tor Vergata University' in Rome. No open call was made for the academic year 2007/2008.

Looking back to the initial background and objectives of the EfD project, rooted in the field of 'Peace & Stability pillar' of AEGEE, the Comité Directeur decided to close the project. Recently, the University of Prishtina has been re-opened, both in Prishtina and Mitrovica. To study inside the EU, the European Commission has introduced the Erasmus Mundus programme and will launch 'Tempus IV' in the upcoming year. AEGEE is together with ESU involved in the Tempus Student Steering group, which aims to facilitate the establishment of student NGOs. Practical experience on the daily work of a student NGO can now be obtained via a Job Shadow Visit, offered by the Youth in Action programme. Thus, with the launch of the Education for Democracy project in 1999, once again AEGEE proved to be a creative initiator and pioneer.

Theijs Van Welij
President of AEGEE-Europe
Zeynep Gülsen
AEGEE-Istanbul
Urska Speh
AEGEE-Ljubljana

Youth in Action – You in Action!

Nadine Karbach

Projects and good ideas often need good funding to become reality. Money makes the world go round and in our case – money makes great initiatives possible! Next to private funding as a stable source, the public sector offers many attractive programmes. One of these possibilities is the Youth in Action programme, initiated by the European Commission and aimed at increasing the EU's mobility and non-formal education activities.

Youth in Action is the successor of the Youth programme, which ended in 2006, and will run from 2007 to the end of 2013. It is a programme for all and can be seen as a key instrument to provide us – young people – with great opportunities for non-formal and informal learning with a European dimension. So AEGEE and the Youth in Action programme fit perfectly together!

Whether you are planning a youth exchange, a seminar, a job shadowing visit or a training course you should always check if the Youth in Action programme offers funding possibilities for your project.

For a better orientation, the programme is divided into several parts, called actions. The guidelines for each action include detailed descriptions of the criteria your project or idea must meet.

The Youth in Action programme generally targets young people aged between 13 and 30 years. Several objectives have been defined. For example, the Youth in Action programme aims to promote young people's active citizenship, in particular their European citizenship, and to foster mutual understanding between young people in different countries as well as improving the quality of support systems for

youth activities and the capabilities of civil society organisations in the youth field.

The programme addresses young people like us, who are domiciled in one of the Programme or Partner countries (depending on the action you apply for). The Programme countries are all 27 EU member states as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey. Neighbouring Partner countries are located in South East Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Mediterranean shores.

A crucial point about the Youth in Action programme is its openness to all young people, independent of their level of education, social or cultural background.

The Youth in Action programme co-finances projects, which means you need to show other sources of finance in your grant application. This other funding can come from participant fees, private sponsors or your university. Since one of the objectives of the Youth in Action programme is to promote European cooperation in the youth field, you should also realise your idea with partners from other places in Europe. Depending on your project and the connected action within the programme two or more partners are required.

Partners can be found within the AEGEE network, but of course you are free to cooperate with other youth organisations if this suits your project better. When applying for a grant you have to demonstrate this cooperation by having all your partners sign the form.

Depending on the action your project is related to, the complete application should be handed in either to your National Youth Agency or to the European

Executive Agency. Both have fixed deadlines which must be met!

European citizenship, the participation of young people, cultural diversity and the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities are permanent priorities of the Youth in Action programme. In addition, the programme defines annual priorities to inspire you to create a great project – or maybe your idea already fits the annual priorities perfectly! In 2007, the annual priority focuses on the European year of equal opportunities and on improving the health of young people through physical and outdoor activities. Next year, 2008, will be the European year of intercultural dialogue.

Now it's time for you to take action! The homepage of the Youth in Action programme offers an initial orientation and some practical details. The programme guide is available to download in several European languages. You should also contact your National Youth Agency to check what information or training events they offer.

And then.....Action!

Useful links:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm --> general overview of the Youth in Action programme

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.html --> Youth in Action portal from the European Commission

Nadine Karbach,
member of AEGEE
Mainz/Wiesbaden
and Speaker of
PRWG.



New Antennae

David de Antonio Villaverde

During the Spring AGORA in Valletta, 11 new locals have joined our network: Bruxelles, Darmstadt, Frankfurt, Oxford, Ponta Delgada, Samara, Santander, Tampere, Vercelli, York and Zadar. In this article, we will analyze four different ways to build a new antenna, whatever its circumstances might be.

AEGEE-SANTANDER

The success of Summer University Project.

AEGEE- Santander can explain why something that for some people is just sex on the beach, means such a great long term project for our association. This story began in Lublin, during summer 2006. Two guys, Jorge Pérez Hidalgo and David de Antonio Villaverde, who knew nothing about AEGEE beforehand, spent some of the best days of their lives there. The happy spirit, new friendships, multicultural experience and hard work of the organizers headed by Kinga Zdunek all motivated them to found a new antenna back home in Spain.

The first step was to meet as many contacts –friends ;)– as possible. Taking part in the Network Meeting in Benicàssim even before they had a clear goal, was the first step to know other antennae and gain their help, trust and motivation. From this moment on, internal education events like LTCs and ESs filled every possible lack of experience or knowledge. They were well supported by the advice of long active members, especially from Oviedo, León and Alicante. Every event you attend offers examples and guidance by tutors, mentors and all the other participants, you must be wide open to new ideas that your team can fit into your

plans.

Two weeks after signing the Convention d'Adhesion, a fast, high-impact info campaign was

launched.

Around 500 posters were placed all over campus, including inside classrooms, bars and youth meeting rooms. A press release was sent to news agencies, to make the media aware of the launch. Some radio stations mentioned the new local as a result. News of the project also reached the most important local newspapers, with an interview after the meeting and another basic point: the Vice-Rectorate agreed to send an email about AEGEE to all University of Cantabria students.

Within two months, AEGEE-Santander had grown to 80 members. They jointly organised their own TSU and made an agreement with the University to run all Erasmus activities, as well as organizing the Autumn Network Meeting and YOUTH programme exchanges with AEGEE Lublin, Baku and Tbilisi.

So this is the story of how a couple of friends in a couple of months built up a strong antenna from nothing, thanks to 14 days in a Summer University.

AEGEE-ZADAR

Recovering your dreams, moving towards Europe.

Croatia is now known as one of the best touristic destinations in Europe, but it still carries the weight of history on its name. In a



word: War. AEGEE's involvement in this region goes back some time, with its support for Belgrade-based student radio stations Radio B92 and Radio Indeks and the peaceful student demonstrations they covered. There have also been projects, such as the Former Yugoslavia Case Study Trips in 1997. A new antenna in this area is always worthy of admiration and pride. Zagreb, Rijeka and now Zadar are examples of our youth movement.

In December 2006, Tanja Domijan, network subcommissioner from AEGEE-Rijeka, sent an info email to the Zadar University representatives. Receiving no answer, instead of giving up, she persisted until Marijana Rošćić became interested. However, it was a busy time for her and she was not sure if she could get involved, so some girls from Rijeka made a presentation in Zadar to find more people to start a new antenna. More than 50 people went and after this, a few of them formed the heart of the project. During June 2007, they had 5 meetings to discuss new ideas and agree on plans and goals. Now, all their hard work will pay off this autumn with an event based on the traditional culture and cuisine of the Zadar area, their first international activity.

Of course, building an antenna is not always a bed of roses. We all

have to negotiate a lot of bureaucracy, with laws differing in each state or even region. Also, in some cases local institutions can be less than cooperative. Zadar's first statutes were rejected – a typical problem in the beginning – but they were soon rewritten to comply with the law.

One of the best ways for an antenna to take off is by finding sponsors. In Zadar, they divide their target firms into regional and national levels, with a separately tailored approach for each. They are also preparing to improve their marketing by making posters and t-shirts, as well as personally communicating the AEGEE message, the most profitable tool to attract new members.

AEGEE-SAMARA

Per aspera ad astra

The idea to create an AEGEE local in Samara was conceived in November 2006, when Elena Solomatkina caught the bug from Elena Mordvinova, her colleague at the Samara State Pedagogical University (SSPU). Until February 2007 it remained just an idea, however. Basic support and help were made via the website and specially through personal communication. Pedro Vieira, Network Development Director at that time, was answering her questions, giving advice and encouragement. By the end of February, finally, an AEGEE contact was established.

Accounting for all the legal nuances while writing the NGO statute proved to be one of the main barriers to creating a new antenna. However, they had the full support of the University Dean and the Chief of the International Department. Other difficulties, such as the need to obtain Schengen visas, remain a problem for all Russian antennae. In their own words: "That's why the motto of all

AEGEE-locals in Russia can be a Latin proverb "Per aspera ad astra" (From the gutter to the stars), because it is really a challenge".

AEGEE-Samara has already organised an international event, "Join Samara in the Grushin Festival!" in July 2007, which allowed people from all over Europe to see their work. The participants even suggested making the festival the business card of AEGEE-Samara and hold a similar event annually.

This event was only the first step in a successful journey. Some of their new projects include: "Integration of the ideas of Democracy in Education", a meeting with teachers and students from a partner university, the Pedagogical University of Ludwigsburg; "Peculiarities of Psychological Adaptation in a Multicultural Environment", a seminar on student exchange programs – not only about "breaking stereotypes" but also covering migration problems; "Higher Education in Russia: how to make it competitive", a students forum; and an Education Action Week.

The president of AEGEE-Samara said: "I'm sure our local has a great future. More and more young people call, write and come to our office! We have many plans and ideas to enrich Samara's student life."

AEGEE -FRANKFURT

From dinosaurs to stars

When Olivier Genkin – one of the most active people in the history of the association, former PR responsible of IPWG, Manager of the 2004 Yearplan Project "EU and Europe" and now Honorary Member of AEGEE-Europe – moved to Frankfurt in summer 2006, he decided to set up an antenna there. Unfortunately, the Comité Directeur took quite some time to approve the request, only

giving a positive reply on 30th March 2007. As the deadline for signing the Convention d'Adhésion at the Spring AGORA – and thus to become a member of the AEGEE network – was only six days away, Olivier had to find his team very quickly. The founding ceremony took place with just one day to spare, and 20 people became the engine of the new Antenna.

Three weeks later at AGORA-Valletta, they signed the Convention d'Adhésion, sharing this special moment with Giessen and Darmstadt. These three cities in western Germany all became Contact-Antennae on the same day, strongly reinforcing the AEGEE presence in the region.

In order to become a full Antenna, the main requirement is to organise a European event. For this, they analysed several different factors: time, members, season... With Summer University time approaching, Olivier and Gunnar Erth, two so-called "dinosaurs" for their reputation and long experience, decided to put this into practice. Having already organised many training events, they created a training programme in May for SU organisers, called "Pimp my SU". It was a great success, arranging such an important and complicated event in a very short time and, as Olivier said, this is proven by the great feedback they received from participants.

With only about 20 members at the moment, their next challenge will be to attract more people, especially current students. At the same time, they lowered the fee for secondary membership, so if you live far away but are interested in joining AEGEE-Frankfurt – "the best antenna in town" – please do not hesitate to contact them!

David de Antonio Villaverde is Vice-President of AEGEE-Santander.

UK, France and Caucasus: Then and Now

Kat Chzhen and Oana Anghel

From the biggest island in Europe, to each end of the continent, we look at the changing face of the AEGEE network in the UK, France and the Caucasus. Some long forgotten antennae sprang back to life, some were newly born: what does the future hold in store for them?

United Kingdom

For years the UK has been a desert island on the AEGEE map. Apart from Cambridge, where AEGEE co-existed with the Cambridge University European Union Society, there were no other active locals in the UK in the summer of 2006. It all changed in the autumn, when AEGEE-Sheffield signed itself into existence and sleeping locals were resurrected in London and Glasgow. Then, locals in Warwick and York were born at the Spring AGORA 2007, and there are plans to set up antennae in Manchester and Stirling, said Network Commissioner Robin Verschuren. "Stirling is the only place where I would really like to see more expansion. Glasgow needs a partner in the north", she said.

Why have locals suddenly mushroomed in Great Britain? Their paths were different but in each case the enthusiastic founders were essential. In AEGEE-Glasgow, Sheffield and Oxford, experienced members moved to the UK to work or study full-time and set up active locals near their new homes. In London, where an antenna had existed on paper for many years, several students interested in AEGEE wrote to the Head Office, met with two Network Commissioners and formed a new

board. At Warwick University, an Erasmus student set up a local almost single-handedly, while a group of students with no previous experience of AEGEE set up a local in York as the European Society. On joining this, you automatically become a member of both AEGEE and the Young European Movement UK, said Tomas Ruta from York.

"I missed AEGEE when I went to England", said Eliza Encheva, founder and former president of AEGEE-Warwick. A member in München for two years, she came to the University of Warwick on Erasmus. Within two months of its establishment, AEGEE-Warwick organised a Regional Training Course, and although she has now moved back to her home university, Eliza is optimistic that the antenna will continue growing. To recruit new members, Warwick, York and Oxford rely on the traditional Freshers Week, the societies' fair at the start of the academic year. "Competition for students among societies is very fierce!" said Tomas.

Despite the issues common to setting up any antenna, some are specific to the UK. Astronomical

they already have many foreign students to socialise with in their universities. In fact, foreign students in Britain are more likely to have heard of AEGEE than the local people. Like Warwick, AEGEE-Oxford is run by foreign students. "We're all from the continent" said President Alexandra Tomescu.

France

There are currently four antennae in France: Paris, Strasbourg, Lyon and Toulouse. Unfortunately, they are quite isolated so there is no feeling of a real network. According to Network Commissioner Robin, university cities are spread over the country and it is hard to organise events and projects without a partner.

Julie Mayoud, Communication Manager for AEGEE-Lyon, agreed that with more collaboration between the locals it would be easier to arrange European events. This year, they put on a small but successful event called Sport and Music in France, during the Lyon music festival. However, after this first experience as an organiser, she said: "we should have planned things earlier so it wouldn't have been so



stressful". But although there are only seven active members in Lyon, besides the regular "tandem evenings" and treks around the city, they meet every Tuesday in a pub and have European parties at which they

prices in London and euro-skepticism are only some of them. According to Robin, the word AEGEE confuses British students and the aims of the society do not speak to their imagination, since

collect emails. This way, by sending invitations to the email list they promote AEGEE to future members. For the next academic year, there is a party planned to celebrate what is believed to be

AEGEE-Lyon's 20th anniversary – no one knows the exact date when the antenna was founded! – and maybe convince people from Grenoble to start their own antenna.

Further away in the North, AEGEE-Strasbourg is one of the most active French antennae. Last year they organised the Model European Union conference and despite having only ten active members, they are already working on MEU 2008. For Adeline Delabre, President since June 2007, this is the second time she takes part in such a project. "If there are people crazy enough to organise it once more, what can I do?" she said. "Everyone, watch out for April 2008!" AEGEE-Strasbourg is keen to recruit more members. So besides putting the current Flagship Project "Education Unlimited" in contact with the Head of the Higher Education Department at the Council of Europe, Adeline said that next year they hope to hold an Education Action Week in Strasbourg, continue cooperating with German antennae as they have done since last August and maybe even do an exchange with a Romanian one.

AEGEE-Paris also has a big project coming up in December. Network Commissioner Robin said that they have recently been approved for a UNESCO grant to help them organise the closing conference of Education Unlimited. This follows a conference they held in March to mark 50 Years since the Treaty of Rome. With a new board taking over from next year, we see the rebirth of the Paris antenna, which only three years ago "fell asleep".

Overall, AEGEE in France needs work to establish stronger links between the different antennae and with the wider network. However, enthusiasm seems to have

returned, so with a cycle of new board inaugurations and ongoing activities, the future does not look too bleak, said Robin.

Caucasus

Although contacts had existed in Tbilisi and Baku since 2000, network activity in the Caucasus did not take off until 2004, when the contact in Tbilisi in Georgia was promoted to a Contact-Antenna. In Azerbaijan, AEGEE-Baku became an antenna and AEGEE-Lenkoran a contact antenna in 2005, with Ganja poised to sign the Convention d'Adhesion this year. In Armenia, a contact was established in the capital in 2006, but this year will probably not see the birth of AEGEE-Yerevan, said Network Commissioner Devin Bahceci.

Locals in the Caucasus have been supporting each other even before the 2006 Caucasus Study Visit to Georgia and Azerbaijan. AEGEE-Tbilisi helped launch an antenna in Baku, although they only began formal cooperation in 2006, when they jointly organized a Travelling Summer University. This year, Baku has organized two Summer Universities: an Azerbaijani language course in July and a joint TSU with Tbilisi in August, said Chinara Mirzayeva, Vice-President of AEGEE-Baku. A similar language course SU and a TSU are also planned for 2008.

Since becoming an Antenna, Baku has participated in the Caucasus Study Trip to Georgia and Azerbaijan in 2006 and organized a "Novruz-Meet New Spring" event in 2007 about the ancient spring festival. They already have a busy schedule for this academic year: a training course with AEGEE-Warszawa about citizenship, identity and culture in September, another Novruz project in spring 2008 and two summer universities. They are also hosting volunteers from a

French NGO in 2008.

AEGEE-Baku has been successful in recruiting new members, especially since the launch of its new website that supports online applications. After applying on the website, new members receive a legal declaration to sign and bring to a weekly meeting. AEGEE-Baku had 59 active members by the start of the 2007/2008 academic year. However, Azerbaijanis can still find it difficult to participate in European activities. Travelling to other parts of Europe is very expensive and the local does not have funds to subsidise its members, Chinara said.

Despite the recent boom in activity, expanding the network in the Caucasus is challenging because of its geographical isolation, high travel costs and strenuous visa application process, Devin said. Also, it is difficult for youth organizations to operate in the current political climate of countries like Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, in Devin's opinion, this makes the positive effects of AEGEE even larger in these countries than in Western Europe. To sustain the growth of the network in the Caucasus, more financial support will be needed, perhaps with positive discrimination in favour of locals from poorer areas, he suggested.

In summary, the foundations of a strong AEGEE network have now been laid in the UK, France and the Caucasus, all areas where little activity occurred several years ago. "You have to create a positive vibe and sense of success that motivates people", said Robin. Whether it is walking around the university with face paint on Europe Day, like AEGEE-Oxford did, or organising a fun Local Training Course to motivate people, the positive vibe is there and success should follow.

Kat Chzhen, AEGEE-Sheffield.
Oana Anghel, AEGEE-Oxford.

European Integration to the max - AEGEE marriages

Wiebke Hahn

As you approach the age of 30, it happens more and more often that you find wedding invitations in your mailbox. Finally, I also received my first invitation to an AEGEE wedding and I packed my suitcase to travel to Romania. Preparing for the wedding of Gunnar Erth, Honorary Member of

finally got married this year. For international couples, the decision to live together means choosing in which country to live - at least one of them has to leave his or her home and move far away from their friends and family, such as Ufuk Bal from Izmir, who has moved to Poland where he lives together with his wife Kasia Pilarczyk, of Wroclaw.

Sometimes the couples can end up in third place. You are quite likely to meet an AEGEE couple in Brussels, such as Nicola Rega from Torino and Diana Filip from Cluj-Napoca. The two former presidents of AEGEE-Europe became close during a common term in the Comité Directeur in 2003. They had lived together for about three and a half years

Brussels." Haiduc junior will probably be as skilled as the little daughter of Erik from Augsburg and Emine Krier from Adana. As her father is originally from Luxemburg, little Ilayda is being raised in Luxemburgish and Turkish and follows the English conversations of her parents. She will surely be a genuine linguist. Also Malin from Helsinki and Stefan Hauk from Passau have been active in the "Little Europeans Working Group" - together with their two sons they live in Helsinki.

For the newlyweds Gunnar and Agi, children are not the hottest topic at the moment - but according to reliable sources, in a couple of years they are planning to increase their family. Could you imagine any better example of

cross-border cooperation?

PS: If you're not planning to attend any more AGORA, but haven't found your match yet, there's still hope. Many couples meet during a wedding... And I see Plenty coming up.....



Agneta Radu and Gunnar Erth AEGEE-Europe, and Agneta Radu from AEGEE-Tirgu-Mures felt a bit like going to an AEGEE event. The happy couple provided travel and lodging information, gave sightseeing hints and encouraged us to bring national drinks for the European night. Especially reading the guest - or participants! - list suggested to me a meeting of Les Anciens, the Alumni organisation of AEGEE Meeting old friends and finally getting to know others about whom you've read a lot - an AEGEE wedding is not all that different from an AGORA.

Many couples in AEGEE met during an AGORA, such as Gunnar and Agi. Others get to know each other in a Summer University, such as Ceren Gergeroglu from Ankara and David de Torres from Zaragoza, who fell in love during the VSU in Zaragoza in 2004 and



when Nicola took the plunge and asked the magic words: "Diana, will you marry me?". Brussels is also the home of Daniela from Maastricht and Calin Haiduc from Cluj-Napoca. "Once we have children, they are going to speak five languages", Daniela says. "Calin's and my mother tongues - Romanian and German, English, and of course French and Flemish - the languages spoken in

Ceren Gergeroglu and David de Torres



How much "AEGEE love spirit" you have?

By Dr Love Maria Nomikou and
Experienced Reporter Adolfo Muñoz Orbañanos

1. You see an advertisement for Summer Universities on a wall. You think:

- What a great chance to find lovers from all over Europe!
- Ah! Just what I wanted. I knew I would miss my classes and books during summer!
- This looks like great fun! I can travel abroad and meet so many people!

2. You are packing your bags for the SU. How many condoms will you take?

- Condoms? What for? To make balloons?
- Well, better to take some and not need them than to not take and need them desperately.
- Three boxes minimum, putting them into both hand luggage and check-in luggage just in case some luggage gets lost or stolen.

3. During the ice breaking games on the first day of an event you think:

- I have to learn the names, surnames and field of studies of everyone in the group.
- I have to learn the name of this cute and charismatic boy/girl. For the rest, "who cares?"
- I have to learn everyone's names, especially the funniest ones!

4. It's time for kissing games:

- You stay in front of someone you like and it just happens that you kiss him/her all the time.
- You go home to sleep because it is really ridiculous to play this game, plus tomorrow morning you have a city tour and need to wake up early!
- You have a goal! Kiss everyone at least once!

5. It is the 5th day of the SU and you feel you have connected with two boys/girls.

- Maybe they will become good friends with you.
- Just enjoy your time and if something gets more "special" with either of them, go for him/her.
- Hurry up; you have to schedule them both for the rest of the SU!

6. Beach time! You need sun cream on your back.

- You put sun cream three or four times every half hour, so boys/girls touch you all the time!
- You ask the person closest to you, no matter if it is boy or girl.
- You go for the boy/girl you like most.

7. It is the day you leave from the Summer University and you have to say goodbye to your "SU girl-friend/boyfriend"

- You take a picture of him/her so that you will remember his/her face as you are not planning to meet him/her again.
- You make an appointment for the next day in skype to exchange photos and discuss the trip.
- You are not leaving without a date for the marriage.

If you have mostly ;)

Wow! Counting up your "love" points? It seems that you have just one aim in life; to flirt (or more...) with as many people from as many countries as you can! Hmm.. maybe you are losing the AEGEE spirit sometimes... Tips for you: Don't go to events that have more people of the "wrong" gender. You will have huge competition and the organizers will not appreciate your strategy. If you see that the person you are approaching is not interested, please stop or you might see your name featured on the mailing lists... AEGEE is like a big family and gossip is always spreading!

If you have mostly :)

It seems you are someone who wants to enjoy life! Your aim is to make friends and have fun but you don't run from nice "experiences" as well! You like to discover new cultures from this perspective, but within limits. You have the AEGEE love spirit! Tips: Be careful during European nights. That's where the risk of losing control is highest! If you continue an affair after the event is over, enjoy it but keep in mind that life is hard and you might get hurt... but... you never know what could happen... (for more, check Wiebke's article about AEGEE marriages!)

If you have mostly :s

Well... Hmmm... What to say? Let's say that you are definitely the easiest case for diagnosis. How much AEGEE love spirit do you have... None! I still have some hopes for you though. Maybe you are in a stable relationship already, or maybe your loneliness is just a passing phase and soon you will enjoy a wonderful love affair. **Tips:** If you are already happy with your other half, it is normal that you are in this category and we wish you all the best! In case you get married soon, inform our magazine and we will definitely announce it in the next edition! But... If you are alone in this life... And especially if this has been true for a long time... Don't hesitate to contact us. Dr Love is here for all of you!



About editors:

Maria, member in both Athina and Zaragoza, is our expert Dr Love. Check out the many previous publications for her articles and advices she gave to wounded hearts. You can recognize her, with the right kind of eyes, from the aura of hearts and pink colour she has around her. Favourite song: Love is in the air!

Adolfo, member of AEGEE-Zaragoza since 2002, is a very experienced AEGEEan. He has visited many events, AGORA and SUs and he has lots of stories to share.

Points:

- | | | |
|----------|-------|-------|
| 1- a. ;) | b. :) | c. :s |
| 2- a. :s | b. :) | c. ;) |
| 3- a. :s | b. ;) | c. :) |
| 4- a. :) | b. :s | c. ;) |
| 5- a. :s | b. :) | c. ;) |
| 6- a. ;) | b. :s | c. :) |
| 7- a. ;) | b. :) | c. :s |

