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KEY2EUROPE

ANNUAL REVIEW 2025

2025

PREFACE BY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



DEAR READERS,

What you are holding in your hands or reading on your screen is more than an annual report. It is a celebration of 40 years of empowering young people, advocating for human rights, encouraging youth participation in democracy, and bringing cultures and people together across borders.

When we started working on this edition of Key to Europe, we knew we wanted not only to mark AEGEE's 40th anniversary, but also to tell the stories behind it, the stories of our Network, our members, and the European teams that keep it alive. In these pages, you will embark on a journey through AEGEE's history, shaped by generations of young people. You will discover the stories of those who continue to carry this legacy forward through European projects, initiatives, and events. From there, the journey will bring you into the present, from Tartu to Istanbul, from Sarajevo to Torino, Brussels, and Groningen, with AEGEEans who all share the courage of creating amazing events together.

This is not just an anniversary edition. It is a recognition of the commitment of our volunteers, the members, local boards, European Bodies, project teams, and event organisers who continue to shape AEGEE every day. Their stories remind us not only of what we have achieved, but also of why we continue. On this occasion, I would like to thank every AEGEEan who contributed through their words, their pictures, and their support. This edition, just as AEGEE, exists because of you.

But more than that, this edition is an invitation to reflect, to connect, and to contribute. To see AEGEE not only as a story of the past 40 years, but as a space where the next chapter is waiting to be written. Because, as someone shared in these pages, AEGEE is a place where ideas can grow, where people can experiment, and where change begins. So take this edition as your inspiration, be bold, be curious, and start writing the next page of AEGEE's history!

Europeanly yours,
Florina Neagu
Editor-in-Chief Key2Europe 2025

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

We, **the members of AEGEE**,

young Europeans coming from all regions of the continent, recognise that we are the future and present of our society and that our contribution to the construction of Europe is our responsibility.

We come together under a common vision of a democratic, diverse and borderless Europe. We come together in AEGEE to form an open, voluntary network where we transform our ideas into actions, develop ourselves to participate actively in society, and contribute to the European debate with our independent student's perspective.

We hereby declare these principles to be fundamental to us:

The diversity of Europe has to be valued, and we reflect it in our organisation. The richness of our continent relies on people from different cultures and backgrounds coming together and being united by common values.

Cooperation between people and communities begins with dialogue and mutual understanding. We bring together students from all regions of Europe and create friendships that break stereotypes and prejudices.

Freedom and human rights are essential elements of a European society. Through our work and behaviour, we aim to serve as an example and spread these values among the youth of our continent.

A strong Europe is built upon the foundations of respect, tolerance and solidarity. Following these values, we stand for an inclusive society where citizens enjoy equal opportunities and rights.

Progress in Europe has to be based on knowledge and unlimited access to education. By providing diverse learning opportunities and supporting a European dimension in education, we believe it gives young people better opportunities for the future.

By honoring and promoting these principles we shape a better Europe.

PREFACE BY PRESIDENT OF AEGEE-EUROPE

DEAR READERS,



Welcome to the celebration magazine marking the 40th anniversary of AEGEE where we come together to celebrate that after four decades! Our organization has stood firmly on the values of building a democratic, diverse, and borderless Europe, an ambition that continues to guide us today. This publication of the Key to Europe yearbook is both a reflection and a celebration. Within these pages, you will discover the achievements of the past 40 years, and in particular, the milestones of this anniversary year, filled with celebrations, impactful advocacy, inspiring projects, and countless moments made possible by thousands of dedicated young volunteers. Their commitment proves that even after nearly half a century, the spirit of AEGEE remains as strong as ever.

While we have many reasons to celebrate, we have to keep in mind the hardships Europe keeps facing every day. In 2026, at the time of this publication, Europe faces significant challenges. As the Russian invasion of Ukraine entered its fourth year, AEGEE continues to advocate for peace, dialogue, and solidarity, while creating spaces where young people from across borders can connect and support one another. We stand in full solidarity with Ukraine, and we hope to reintegrate both Ukrainian and Russian youth after the conflict has ended into the European oriented mindframe we represent. At the same time, democratic deficits and growing radicalization are becoming increasingly evident across Europe. In response, AEGEE has strengthened its presence within numerous umbrella organisations and actively advocates across multiple platforms, working to ensure that international youth NGOs are meaningfully considered in decision-making processes and that the voices of young people are heard. Alongside these challenges, many across Europe are facing economic hardship. In response, AEGEE has remained committed to accessibility, continuing to organise non-formal educational activities and cultural exchanges while striving to keep participation affordable and inclusive, ensuring that young people can stay engaged regardless of their financial situation.

Crises can divide societies, but they can also bring people together and at AEGEE, we have consistently chosen the latter by providing a platform for young people to connect, learn, and act. The images in this yearbook offer just a glimpse of the energy, diversity, and dedication that define our network. As we celebrate this milestone, we also look ahead with determination, resilience, and hope, and the journey toward a more united Europe is far from over, but together, we continue to take meaningful steps forward.

Europeanly yours,
Petra Gombár
President of AEGEE-Europe 2025/26

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40 YEARS OF EMPOWERING YOUTH

40 YEARS OF AEGEE

European Students' Forum, also known as AEGEE-Europe, is one of the largest interdisciplinary youth organisations in Europe. Our story began in April 1985, when students from the ten countries of the European Community, Spain and Portugal gathered in Paris. Initiated by a political science student, Franck Biancheri, this meeting marked the beginning the EGEE I conference.

EGEE I, which started on the 16th of April 1985 and lasted a week, brought together about 350 students to take part in two big parties (at the Conciergerie and the Château Maison-Laffite), two receptions (at the Assemblée Nationale and the Mairie de Paris) and conferences given by over sixty speakers from amongst the most prestigious in France. These conferences took place daily in seven different venues."

Frank Biancheri, in his book "The emergence of Eurocitizens"

From the very beginning, they wanted to create a platform where young people could openly discuss European issues and present their ideas with a united voice to both European and national institutions. Over time, AEGEE

grew into a bigger network, all over Europe, from Tenerife to Tyumen, bringing together volunteers in projects and multidisciplinary teams. Ever since then, our vision has remained the same: to foster a democratic, diverse, and borderless Europe that is socially, economically, and politically integrated, and that actively values the participation of young people in its construction and development.



In 2025, we celebrated our 40th anniversary. On this occasion, let's look back at the journey that shaped AEGEE-Europe, as we know it today.

1985 - 1995

In 1985, AEGEE-Europe (then known as EGEE) officially became an organisation. Over the following months, students started founding local Antennae across Europe and expanding the network within just a few years. By 1986, AEGEE had already grown to 26 local organisations and over one thousand members, launching projects focused on traineeships, language learning, and international cooperation. It also organised large-scale events such as the **“Nuits pour l’Europe”**, in collaboration with Le Monde, connecting students and politicians across seven cities through broadcasts, via a satellite link, a new concept at the time.

“I was honoured when I received a letter from the university president upon our creation. Second, an enormous expansion of my friends' circles, across borders. We all share this story, I guess. Third, the start of my European career. We launched the concept of Euromanagers at an AEGEE-Köln conference, inviting all directors of business schools we knew. Surprise, they all came!”

Christophe Leclercq, founding president of AEGEE-Köln (1986) and founder of the Euractiv media network

In 1987, AEGEE played an important role in shaping what we know today as **the Erasmus Programme**, with ideas and advocacy towards François Mitterrand, the President of France, and Domenico Lenarduzzi, Head of

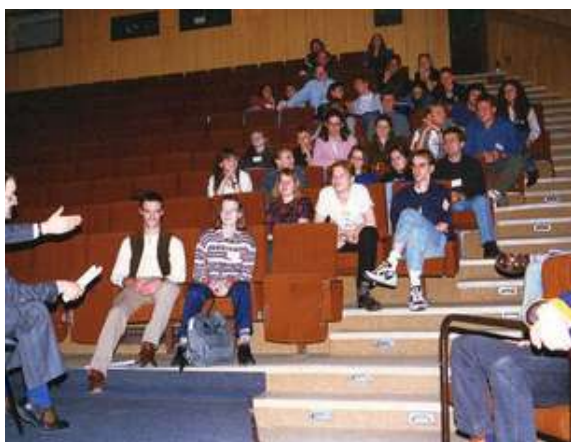
Education of the European Commission at the time. Launched in the same year, Erasmus would go on to become one of the European Union’s most successful initiatives. In the following year, AEGEE introduced its own flagship mobility project, **the Summer University**, with thousands of young people travelling, learning, and connecting across borders.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, AEGEE expanded and opened its network to the whole continent. This decision led to growth in Central and Eastern Europe, reinforcing its vision of a borderless Europe. By the early 1990s, the organisation gained recognition from institutions such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE, and entered a new phase.



1995 - 2005

As a new decade opened, so too did a new chapter in the history of AEGEE. The second half of the 1990s was marked by many changes both within Europe and the organisation, and this is when we started becoming more vocal on global issues. In 1995, for example, the organisation publicly opposed nuclear testing in Europe, marking a shift towards a stronger voice on political issues.



In 1996, we launched the **“Find Your Way” project**, which helped students in Central and Eastern Europe navigate emerging democratic societies, with conferences, trainings and cross-border collaboration. Throughout this period, AEGEE organised numerous initiatives that strengthened our network and reputation, including contributions to discussions around the future of the Euro, five years before it was implemented. Internally, the organisation also evolved when we

moved our **headquarters to Brussels**, bringing it closer to European institutions, and created new bodies such as **the Network Commission** to support local branches and expand the network. At the same time, innovative activities like “case study trips” helped youth to explore political and social realities in regions such as Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

By the late 1990s, AEGEE had further established itself as a key youth actor in Europe. In 1998, we became a member of the European Youth Forum, and we launched thematic projects, including **the Peace Academy**, initiated by Greek and Turkish locals (AEGEE-Istanbul, AEGEE-Athina, AEGEE-Ankara), which brought together young people to work on conflict resolution and dialogue, particularly in regions affected by tensions.

In the early 2000s, we continued to focus on peacebuilding, education, and intercultural dialogue. Projects such as **the Education for Democracy initiative in Kosovo and the Turkish-Greek Civic Dialogue** fostered cooperation and reconciliation, while educational initiatives like EURECA contributed to discussions on the future of European higher education. During this time, our members organised events in regions such as the Caucasus and Cyprus, and

strengthened their role within European civil society through membership in organisations like the European Movement International. By the mid-2000s, AEGEE had reached one of its most active periods, with a peak in projects, partnerships, and the highest number of organised Summer Universities.



2005 - 2015

Entering the new decade, AEGEE-Europe underwent important structural and strategic changes to adapt to its growing network. Between 2012-2014, for example, we redefined our core identity by updating our vision, mission, and values to better reflect the current evolution.

As the organisation expanded, new internal structures were introduced, while the decade was also marked by the launch of some of the most impactful projects that reinforced AEGEE's position in European youth participation. Initiatives such as **"Take Control!"** promoted democratic

engagement through Election Observation Missions, while projects like **"Youth Globalisation"** and **"Sustaining our Future"** addressed political participation and sustainability.



Two flagship projects that remain central today were born during this period. **Y Vote**, launched in 2009, aimed to increase youth participation in European elections through workshops, debates, and awareness campaigns. Other initiatives, such as **the Eastern Partnership Project** and **"Where Does Europe End?"**, promoted youth mobility, active citizenship, and conflict resolution, particularly in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

In 2012, the second flagship project, **Europe on Track**, sent young ambassadors across the continent for the first time to engage with thousands of young people and collect their perspectives on Europe's future, earning the Charlemagne Youth Prize in 2013. Since then, dozens of ambassadors have taken part in the project, AEGEEans organised hundreds

40 YEARS OF EMPOWERING YOUTH

of local events across more than 30 countries with thousands of participants. The same year, one AEGEEan was elected to the board of the European Youth Forum, and later, we also had a representative in the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe.

2015 - 2025

In 2015, AEGEE-Europe celebrated our **30th anniversary** by revisiting one of our founding ideas: the “Night of the Seven Antennae.” Reimagined with modern technology, the event once again connected students across Europe to debate its future, this time in a very different context, marked by a larger European Union and the rise of Euroscepticism. The initiative was later recognised with the Charlemagne Youth Prize in Bulgaria.



The following years brought major political shifts. The 2016 Brexit referendum had a profound impact on the European landscape and AEGEE’s work, reinforcing its commitment to dialogue and active citizenship.

Projects like **“Your Vision for Europe”** and participation in initiatives such as **Pulse of Europe** reflected the organisation’s response to rising populism and anti-European sentiment. During this period, AEGEE placed a strong emphasis on dialogue, inclusion, and human rights. Discussions within the network increasingly focused on topics such as populism, European identity, and relations with Russia, especially in the context of the Euromaidan and ongoing regional tensions. Initiatives like **Human Rights Day** and the **SMASH project (Structural Measures Against Sexual Harassment)** aimed to promote safer, more inclusive environments both within and beyond the organisation.



At the same time, AEGEE continued to innovate through projects addressing future challenges. In 2018, AEGEE received accreditation from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and contributed to the creation of broader youth coalitions on climate action. At the same time, AEGEE continued to innovate through projects addressing future challenges, such as

the MY-WAY project, which explored youth entrepreneurship, while increasing attention was given to sustainability. The third edition of **Y Vote** also took place in 2019.



The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 forced the organisation to adapt, moving its activities online while maintaining strong engagement across the network. As in-person events resumed, AEGEE reaffirmed its values by adopting **a new Code of Conduct** and strengthening its commitment to safe and inclusive spaces. In response to the war in Ukraine, it also established initiatives to support affected communities and raise awareness, such as the **Help Ukraine Taskforce**.



In recent years, we have continued to evolve through new strategic priorities focused on dialogue, digitalisation, and sustainability. Long-standing projects such as Europe on Track (already at its



12th edition) and Y Vote (already at its 5th edition) remained central to our mission, while new partnerships and initiatives further expand our impact. Today, AEGEE remains a young, dynamic and growing network. Despite political challenges and global crises, we continue to empower young people across Europe, proving that the vision of a diverse, connected, participatory, and borderless Europe is still very much alive.



AEGEE TODAY

Today, AEGEE works as a **politically independent, secular, and non-profit organisation** that empowers students and young people to take an active role in society. By creating a space for dialogue, learning, and cultural exchange, while also representing youth perspectives towards decision-makers, AEGEE continues to strengthen mutual understanding and bring Europe closer to its young people.

To achieve its aims, AEGEE uses five different means to involve and motivate its members:

INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE

AEGEE creates a space for members of different backgrounds to meet and learn about cultural differences, in order to foster mutual understanding. AEGEE supports mobility and encourages young people to cross borders and make new friends, to break stereotypes and to strengthen tolerance, respect and solidarity.

The following years brought major political shifts. The 2016 Brexit referendum had a profound impact on the European landscape and AEGEE's work, reinforcing its commitment to dialogue and active citizenship.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

AEGEE provides learning opportunities for the development of its members through non-formal education and informal learning. By participating in training courses, workshops, and active involvement in the organisation, our members improve their competencies (such as leadership, communication and team management skills) which will be useful for their future.

THEMATIC PROJECTS

Thematic projects, both local and international, are initiatives developed by members of AEGEE. They deal with current challenges in European society, create awareness among young people and propose solutions from a student's point of view.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

AEGEE gathers the opinions of European students and represents them towards stakeholders through campaigns, lobby actions, conferences and membership in bigger platforms. In addition, AEGEE informs students and young people about the impact that European policies have on their lives and the opportunities they offer.



FORUM FOR DISCUSSION

AEGEE provides a space for young Europeans to discuss and exchange different points of view from a European perspective, to find a common ground. This exchange of ideas happens in all of our activities, but a special place for them is inside our projects, conferences and statutory events (European Planning Meetings and Agorae).

Nowadays, AEGEE's network of students and young Europeans provides the ideal platform for volunteers from different nationalities to work together on cross-border activities such as international

projects, conferences, seminars, exchanges, training courses, and case study trips. AEGEE operates in a unique structure, as it directly connects its local groups and the European bodies without any national level of organisation, reflecting AEGEE's ideal of a Europe without borders. The European bodies are Projects, Working Groups (WGs), Interest Groups (IGs), Commissions, Committees, and the European Board of Directors, called the Comité Directeur (CD).

STRATEGIC PLAN AND ACTION AGENDA

Every three years, hundreds of AEGEEans meet to draft the new Strategic Plan. The concept of the Strategic Plan is to foresee a significant change in the organisation and in Europe in three years, and put AEGEE in a key role towards these changes. This is the reason why the Strategic Plan of AEGEE, in its current shape, is divided into two main parts: a thematic and an organisational part, the Action Agenda.



40 YEARS OF EMPOWERING YOUTH

The Strategic Plan consists of focus areas. Working Groups carry out the thematic goals of AEGEE-Europe described in the Strategic Plan of the organisation. Their goal is to ensure that the thematic focuses of AEGEE have been fulfilled. To put the thematic focus areas of the Strategic Plan into practice within the Network, each year a new Action Agenda is developed during the European Planning Meeting. In this Action Agenda, certain goals (objectives) are given for the aims of the focus areas to be worked on in the next year.

STATUTORY EVENTS

The Agora, the European Planning Meeting, and Strategic Planning Meeting are AEGEE's statutory events.

The Agora is the General Assembly of the association, held twice a year, in spring and in autumn, gathering 200-400 students for three to four days. The Agora is the place where young Europeans gather in one place to build the future of the organisation together. The main discussions and decisions take place during the plenary meetings.

The participants of the Agora also join workshops, pryntania (to discuss changes to the statutes of the organisation), progress meetings about ongoing projects, and other programmes.

The European Planning Meeting gathers together around 100 experienced AEGEE members in order to draft the Action Agenda for the upcoming year. Besides working on the preparation of AEGEE's Action Agenda, participants take part in workshops, panel discussions and round table discussions related to the general topic chosen for the event at the previous Agora.

EUROPEAN SCHOOLS & TRAINING EVENTS

Non-formal education is an integral part of AEGEE. Most of AEGEE's training events are organised by our Training Committee, in cooperation with other AEGEE bodies who are experts in certain fields, such as committees of project teams. During these events, participants get a chance to understand how non-governmental organisations operate, and at the same time develop their skills.

Diverse training methods, which include lectures, workshops and case studies, create the perfect environment for fast knowledge absorption among the trainees. Along with European Schools, AEGEEans can also attend trainings and develop their skills at events such as Local Training Courses (LTC), Regional Training Courses (RTC) and Network Meetings (NWM).

FOREVER AEGEEAN FOREVER EUROPEAN

IN THE
SPOTLIGHT



MEET
LES ANCIENS D'AE GEE
OUR ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



AEGEE HISTORY IN A NUTSHELL

1985

AEGEE (the États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe) is founded on **16th April 1985**

1986

AEGEE organise **Nuit de l'Europe**, a simultaneous event on a variety of topics in several European cities

1987

Lobbying to implement the **Erasmus programme** with support of François Mitterrand

1988

The Summer University Project is born. The organisation name changes to AEGEE

1989

AEGEE decides to expand itself to the whole European continent. The **East-West Working Group** is established

1990

Les Anciens is established as our alumni organisation. AEGEE adopts its **logo**, the "key to Europe".

1999

AEGEE becomes a full Member Organisation of the **European Youth Forum**

2001

The **AEGEE Academy** is founded. AEGEE organises major projects focusing on peace and stability

2002

AEGEE launches one of its biggest and most successful projects: **The Turkish-Greek Civic Dialogue**

2003

AEGEE becomes a formal member of the **European Movement International** (EMI)

2004

AEGEE is one of the founding NGOs of the **European Civil Society Platform for Lifelong Learning** (EUCISLLL)

2006

AEGEE launches the project **Take Control!** - ways to democracy in Europe

2013

Europe on Track wins the **European Charlemagne Youth Prize**

2014

AEGEE launches the second edition of the **Y Vote project**. **AEGEE Election Observation and Democracy in Practice** are also launched

2015

AEGEE celebrates its **30th anniversary** with several conferences all over Europe, including the Night of the Seven Antennae

2016

Your Vision for Europe Project is launched. The Night of the Seven Antennae wins the **Bulgarian Charlemagne Youth Prize**

2018

For the first time, a statutory event is held in the Caucasus Region: **EPM 2018** took place in March in Yerevan, Armenia

2019

The third edition of **Y Vote** takes place, as the biggest election-related campaign for AEGEE

1991

AEGEE becomes a pioneer in the field of non-formal education by organising its **first European School** in Madrid

1992

AEGEE receives consultative status at the **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe** (OSCE)

1993

AEGEE receives official NGO status at the **Council of Europe** (CoE)

1996

More than 1000 students are actively involved in the conference series of the **Find Your Way project**

1997

The **“Europe and Euro” project** raises awareness of the new European currency, five years before its introduction

1998

AEGEE organises **case study trips** to Cyprus, Moldova and the Former Yugoslavia

2007

AEGEE plays a key role in the enlargement of the **Erasmus programme to Turkey**.

2008

Launch of the **Y Vote 2009** campaign to encourage voting in the European elections

2009

AEGEE wins the **Charlemagne Youth Prize** for the YOUrope Needs YOU! Project.

2010

AEGEE organises the **United Nations Millennium Development Goals Conference**

2011

AEGEE initiates the **Eastern Partnership Project**

2012

AEGEE launches the **Europe on Track project**.

2020

For the first time in AEGEE’s history, **Agora**, our General Assembly, takes place online, with more than 300 participants

2021

Three new contacts joined our Network: **Le Mans**, **Konstanz**, and **Joensuu** are established.

2022

AEGEE returns to holding offline Statutory Events, after the pandemic, with AEGEEans gathering at **Agora Novi Sad**.

2023

The **fourth edition of Y Vote** is launched to increase youth participation and voting in the 2024 European Elections.

2024

The **partnership with ESTIEM** is made official at Agora Novi Sad, resulting in many activities together

2025

AEGEE celebrates the **40th anniversary**; the **fifth edition of Y Vote** is launched

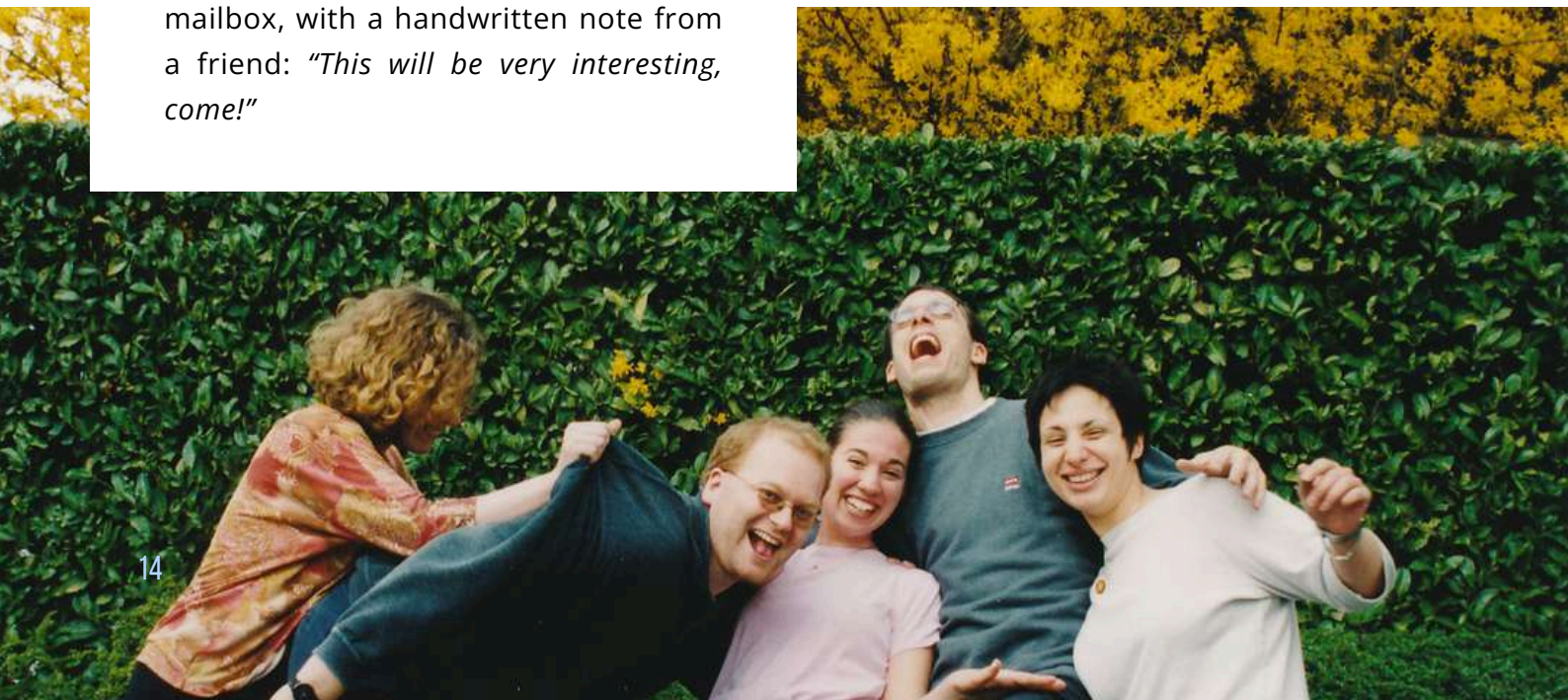
CARRYING THE AEGEE STORY FORWARD

MEET GUNNAR: A LIVING PIECE OF AEGEE HISTORY

You may have seen him before, with a camera in hand at an Agora, leading a workshop on AEGEE's history, or sharing stories about the organisation at a party. Or perhaps you've come across **Golden Times** on Instagram one day, the magazine that connects AEGEE's past and present. Gunnar has been part of AEGEE in one way or another for three decades, and his story is proof that our organisation really brings people together, across different generations.

His AEGEE journey began in February 1995, when he was an exchange student in Szeged, Hungary, and he remembers it like it was yesterday. Gunnar found a flyer in his dorm mailbox, with a handwritten note from a friend: *"This will be very interesting, come!"*

Then he met fellow AEGEEans and discovered that it was more than just a student organisation. It was, as he describes it, *"bristling with life... addictive, wild, creative, passionate"*, with young people who wanted to make Europe a better place. Within just three months, he had already travelled to conferences in Bratislava, Skopje, Budapest, and even an Agora in Amsterdam. His very first event? A Valentine's Day conference called "The Love Academy", where young people gathered to seriously discuss love in conference rooms.



He started as the IT Responsible of AEGEE-Szeged, later joining the Human Rights Working Group, and eventually leading it. One experience stayed with him from that time, a trip to Tuzla during the Bosnian War, where he joined local students who wanted to create an AEGEE Contact, through a UN-protected city while hearing distant shelling. *“These are things you only do with AEGEE.”*

Soon after, in 1996, he joined the Comité Directeur and worked on one of AEGEE’s projects, **Find Your Way**, supporting democratic development in Central and Eastern Europe.



But if you ask him about his favourite role, he won’t hesitate: it was definitely being a Network Commissioner. Supporting Locals from Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Slovakia, and Serbia, he also recalls his favourite memory, a road trip with Markus Schönherr, who was Network Director, convincing five Locals to organise Summer Universities.

And Gunnar’s journey would not be the same without **Key2Europe**, yes,

the very magazine you’re reading right now. Starting in 1997, Gunnar worked on five editions, including the 20th anniversary book. Back then, as a young journalist, it was more than a volunteer role, it was a turning point for him. At one job interview, he placed the magazines on the table to prove his skills went beyond writing articles, and it worked!



After meeting his partner through the organisation, at their wedding in 2007, he received a special gift, the “Key to Gunnar”, which brought him many tears of joy. After all, almost all the wedding guests were AEGEE members, so when he stood up to give a speech, he instinctively began with: *“Dear participants...”*

He was also part of the Members Commission in 1999 (our today’s Mediation Commission), and was one of the founders of the AEGEE Academy. Until 2003, he was a trainer or main organiser at ten European Schools or similar training courses.

“AEGEE offers these fantastic opportunities, and people just need to seize them!”

40 YEARS OF EMPOWERING YOUTH

Even after stepping back from active roles, Gunnar never truly left. He continued attending local events in Frankfurt and statutory events, while also coordinating our alumni network and eventually creating what would become **Golden Times**. Originally meant as an alumni magazine, it quickly evolved.

Today, it serves as both a living archive and a bridge between

“What I did not expect: it became very popular among AEGEE members, so the content shifted from alumni matters to current AEGEE issues. So I renamed it to Golden Times after a few months. The rest is history.”

something more personal.

After all these years, Gunnar still believes in

generations. And Gunnar himself has taken on a similar role. Since 2012, he has been delivering **history workshops** across AEGEE events, helping new members understand the organisation they are part of and why it matters. And this continues to this day! The sessions are usually between 90 minutes and two hours long and cover either the general history of AEGEE or specific aspects like projects, specific thematics, or geographical regions.

What motivates him? The opportunity to inspire young people, to tell the great achievements of their predecessors, and to entertain them with the countless funny stories that are part of AEGEE history as well.

And beyond projects, events, or even history, what defines AEGEE for him is

the same idea that brought him to that first meeting in Szeged, a Europe without borders, built through connection, openness, and this mindset of curiosity to discover other cultures and to make friends across Europe.

“It’s realising that you have more in common with someone in Utrecht or Athens than with your neighbour. We are Europeans, we care about elections in Hungary, earthquakes in Turkey, music in Italy - and I don’t know any other place like this.”





AEGEE, in his eyes, is a playground, a space where ideas can take shape and where young people can dare to create something bigger than themselves. After all, AEGEE has always been about finding people who believe in the same idea and building something together, across cities, across cultures, across borders. He also sees AEGEE as a legacy built by generations of young



Europeans, a legacy not only of projects and events, but of connections, courage, and shared experiences.

And maybe that is the real story of AEGEE. Not just what it has done, but what it continues to inspire, because in the end, our AEGEE experience is a journey, one that each generation has the chance to shape and carry forward.

“Fulfil your dream! If you have an idea for an event or project, just do it! Make it! AEGEE is a network of thousands of people in more than 100 cities. Find the right people and create something great together! And don't listen to people who take themselves too seriously. Enjoy the ride! Get inspired by the past and be active. You don't need to repeat it, just adapt it to today's reality. If you do it, you will become part of AEGEE's history yourself.”



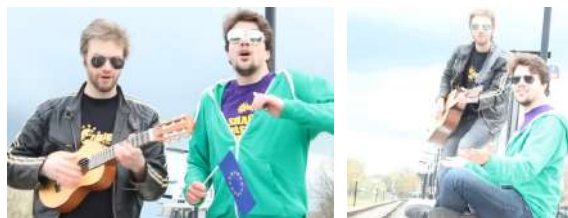
THE SOUND OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

This article was written by Benjamin Feyen, a former member of AEGEE-Düsseldorf.

Did you know that the Europe on Track project has its own song? Have you ever heard of Snowman Alexander? Well, let's travel back to the year 2014 and the "Fabrik AEGEE-ènne de Müzik Europea" – short: **FAMEproject**. The idea: Create multilingual pop songs to promote European integration, multilingualism, our values, and to strengthen a common European identity. While the project was relatively short-lived, it left our AEGEE family with two legendary songs.

"Europe on Track", the song named after the project, premiered at the Spring Agora Patra 2014. It's all about travelling across a borderless Europe. The lyrics list more than 100 cities – from Aachen to Zadar – in all European countries, and the unique chorus contains 20 different languages: Europe on track – yeah, granice sunt weg. Matkaamme per бүтүн Europa. Siamo u trévo – Határok, farvål! Viajando het život ir belle. Então, npocto join! You can imagine that in a pre-ChatGPT era, it took me quite a while to come up with cross-language rhymes. My co-producer, Wessel Reijers (AEGEE-Enschede) did an excellent job singing the song, and as Europe on Track 2 ambassador, he

also performed it live whenever possible.



"(We Are) All Made of Snow" is probably best remembered for its iconic animated video clip, made by Jakob Wöllenstein (AEGEE-Leipzig). The song promotes an inclusive society, symbolized by several snowmen who realize that "we can tolerate each other if we see we are all made of snow". After writing the lyrics together with Claudio Gennaro (AEGEE-Cagliari) and Jelena Stanković (AEGEE-Beograd), I recorded the song in the Brussels with AEGEE members, but their vocal contributions made the track special. Both songs are available on streaming platforms online:



**IN THE
SPOTLIGHT**

READ THE AEGEE GOLDEN TIMES

**DISCOVER STORIES,
OLD & NEW**



15 YEARS OF ENCOURAGING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRACY

HOW Y VOTE BECAME PART OF AEGEE'S STORY

You've probably heard this before: young people either don't vote or aren't interested enough in politics for their turnout to matter in the final results. But in 2009, AEGEE-Europe decided to challenge that narrative, with a project that would, over the years, become one of its most successful initiatives.

They called it **Y Vote**, so this is the story of a project that, in time, became part of AEGEE's identity, because today, it is hard to imagine one without the other. This is the story told through the eyes of its former team members.

HOW IT ALL STARTED: Y VOTE 2009

And like any good story, it began with a question: *What would happen if young people didn't just vote, but truly felt that Europe was theirs to shape and did something about it?*

The first edition of Y Vote began during closer to the 2009 European elections, at a time when youth turnout was low. They wanted to encourage first-time voters, mainly young people between 18 and 22, not only to show up at the polls, but to understand why it was important for them to vote.

At the heart of the project back then was Y Vote's founder, Dragan Stojanovski, later the Project Manager, whose vision shaped Y Vote into a campaign, built by young people, for young people, who truly cared for the European story, and who believed in active contribution to society for the sake of democracy.



The journey officially began in Vienna in September 2008, with a conference that would turn into a year-long, Europe-wide mobilisation. Over the months leading up to the elections, a series of one-week international conferences was hosted in student cities across Europe, from Cologne to Budapest and Rome, each focusing on topics relevant to youth such as education, employment, migration, and Europe's role in the world. The outcome? **"The Youth Agenda 2009"**, a manifesto that gathered the voices, concerns, and ideas of young participants from across Europe and reflected the energy of a generation that wanted to be heard.

"With Y Vote, AEGEE turned towards the very essence of EU integration, that European decision-making is not only **for** its citizens, but also **with** its citizens."

Thijs de Wolff, Y Vote Content & Formats Manager 2009, in an article for Key2Europe

Y Vote was never meant to stay within conference rooms. As the elections approached, the campaign moved into the everyday spaces of young people's lives, from streets and campuses to public squares. In the UK, known at that time as by far the most Eurosceptic EU member state, they did a tour with a Y Vote van, drawing the attention of all passers-by with their balloons and the van's speakers blasting loud music. Online, they explored what was then still a relatively new technology at that time - blogs and social media platforms like

Facebook and YouTube - to spread their message further and faster than ever before, and meet youth where they were.

"It was marvellous to see Facebook statuses of hundreds of friends show 'I voted for European elections', not to mention the online comments on the Y Vote 2009 performance on Europarl TV's Election Night broadcast. Yet still not everybody has replaced older-fashioned communication with e-social media.

One sunny spring day in 2009, Dragan Stojanovski got a best wishes message from the President of Italy, Giorgio Napolitano, by telegram."



Y VOTE 2014: FROM AWARENESS TO UNDERSTANDING

In 2009, despite all efforts, more than 50% of young people in Europe had not taken part in the elections. And so, in 2014, AEGEE-Europe brought Y Vote back, this time as a bigger platform. At that time, for many, understanding the EU felt a bit overwhelming and distant. **Y Vote 2014** wanted to change that and do more than encourage participation. The project team wanted to address the lack of clear, accessible, and trustworthy information about the European Union. Through eight international youth conventions and a final conference, participants explored key European issues and shared their concerns. They looked into the main issues for young people, within the competence of the EU, and then proposed concrete and clear solutions, compiled in a **“Students' Agenda for Europe”**, towards future members of the European Parliament.

“After the final convention, we all went back home, glad for having taken part in it, and extremely happy to have met such amazing people. Because, at the end of the day, it is always about the people you meet. And this, we believe, is one of the strongest messages of AEGEE.”

Hana Hudak (AEGEE-Paris) & Tessa Speelman (AEGEE-Utrecht), in an article in The AEGEEan, in 2014



Bus tours once again brought the campaign into the streets, this time across countries like Spain and the United Kingdom, while local events and training sessions ensured that the message reached communities locally. And with this edition, Y Vote took another step forward, not only a campaign to encourage youth to vote, but also as a bridge between young Europeans and Europe.

Y VOTE 2019: FROM INFORMATION TO EMPOWERMENT

By the time the next European Elections came, 5 years later, the support for the European Union was higher than ever. Since fewer than 30% of young people had voted in the 2014 European Parliament elections, AEGEE-Europe stepped in with a new edition of Y Vote, this time aiming not only to inform but also to empower youth.



Led by a new generation of Y Vote team members, the 2019 edition embraced a new goal: to give young people the tools and information necessary to take part in democracy, even beyond elections. This was captured in what we know today as the Y Vote slogan: **Develop. Empower. Involve.** For its Project Manager, this journey had started long before 2019.

"I think it was a dream since I first joined AEGEE. A Y Vote Convention was my first event... and I wanted to be part of such a team one day. Throughout the years, I gained more experience, and I thought, "Well, this is it!" I hoped to impact a new generation, just like the 2014 edition had inspired me."

Philipp Blum, Project Manager of
Y Vote 2019

The project itself also began before the elections, because throughout 2018, dozens of local activities took place across Europe, including workshops during Summer Universities, bringing basic information about EU institutions closer to young people in accessible and interactive ways. At the end of 2018, the project began its emblematic Y Vote conventions, where young people debated and shaped ideas for Europe's future, contributing to what became "Our Agenda for Europe". But perhaps one of the most innovative changes in the project was the online Voting Guide, delivered through the app "How to vote?", with clear, country-

specific guidance for voters across Europe and abroad. The app and the social media campaign reached hundreds of thousands of people during a time when the project team fully embraced social media like never before.



When asked if there was a moment that stayed with him over the years, Philipp recalled the first Y Vote 2019 convention, in Cluj-Napoca, because it taught him that you should never judge something based on your high expectations. It can turn out great when young people are around.

Y VOTE 2024: FROM EMPOWERMENT TO OWNERSHIP

By 2024, the situation in Europe had changed. For the first time in years, youth turnout was no longer the only story around this important event in Europe. The 2019 elections showed that young people care and want to engage with democracy in the European Union. But the question remained: [how do you sustain that momentum, and how do you keep them engaged, beyond the election day?](#)

40 YEARS OF EMPOWERING YOUTH

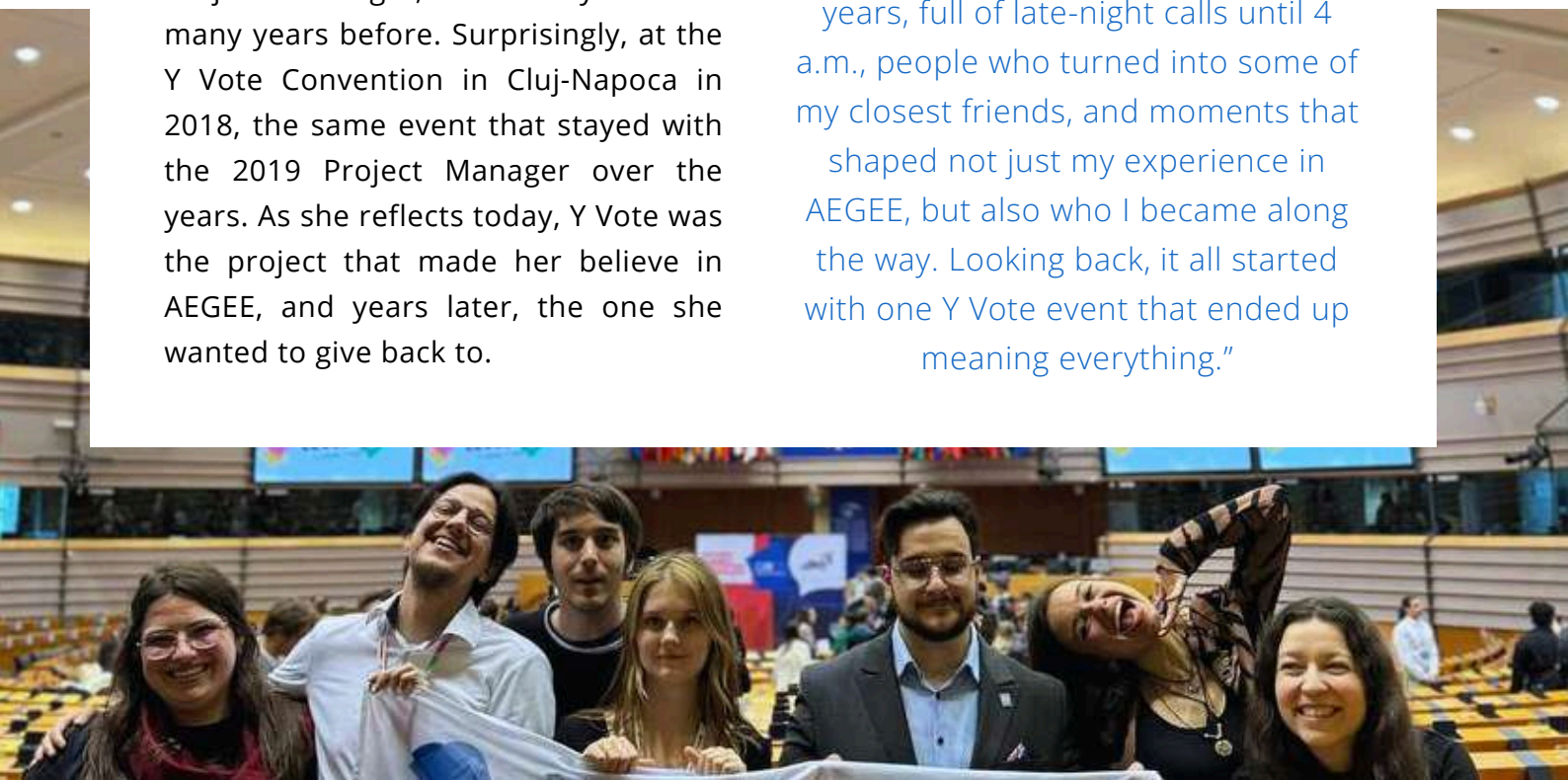
Once again, AEGEE-Europe turned to Y Vote, which was now more than a Europe-wide campaign, it was a continuation of a legacy. **Y Vote 2024** started in March 2023, carrying forward everything the project had built over the years, mainly to develop, empower, and involve young people in shaping the future of Europe. The project was no longer about only providing information and encouraging young people to vote, it focused on something deeper: ownership. It was about encouraging young people to shape a future in which they see themselves as active citizens.



Similar to Philipp, for Florina, the new Project Manager, the story started many years before. Surprisingly, at the Y Vote Convention in Cluj-Napoca in 2018, the same event that stayed with the 2019 Project Manager over the years. As she reflects today, Y Vote was the project that made her believe in AEGEE, and years later, the one she wanted to give back to.

Across 20 countries, the project engaged hundreds of local participants through dozens of local actions and international events, while reaching tens of thousands more online, on six social media channels. This time, the project introduced an Ambassadors Programme. 12 ambassadors in 10 countries, together with other local organisers, became multipliers of the message, bringing discussions about democracy and Europe into their own communities. While a Voting Guide was once again available online, young people's ideas and concerns for youth participation in democracy were compiled in a policy paper for European policy-makers.

“My first AEGEE event was a Y Vote Convention in 2018. I always say that it's the reason I stayed in AEGEE, and why I later said yes to joining the Y Vote team. What followed was a rollercoaster, three beautiful, intense years, full of late-night calls until 4 a.m., people who turned into some of my closest friends, and moments that shaped not just my experience in AEGEE, but also who I became along the way. Looking back, it all started with one Y Vote event that ended up meaning everything.”



Y VOTE 2025: THE STORY CONTINUES LIKE NEVER BEFORE

And if you are reading about Y Vote in this edition of Key2Europe, it is because 2025 marked something unprecedented in its story. For the first time since its creation in 2009, Y Vote did not return after five years, during the European Parliament elections, but as a yearly commitment. What had once been a campaign tied to European electoral cycles became something more necessary. It became a continuous effort to keep young people engaged in democracy, beyond voting. Because the reality has changed, with political polarisation and the rise of extremist narratives becoming more visible across Europe, especially among youth.

In 2025, Y Vote shifted its focus towards sustained engagement through a digital Europe Week, a campaign, and a podcast. The **“YOUTH Got a Point” podcast** created the space for young voices to speak, question, and reflect on the Europe they are part of. Even in a lighter operational year, the essence remained the same: to keep the conversation alive.

Because in the end, Y Vote was never just about elections. It was and continues to be about empowering young people and making sure they

have the necessary information to make an informed decision when voting, engaging with democracy, and actively participating in it. For Philipp:

“The strength of AEGEE is not in changing others, but in changing ourselves. So, did we get many more people to vote? I do not know. Did we help to build amazing personalities? I certainly think so. Looking back, we did motivate a new generation, and I am happy to still see quite a lot of these people going strong!”

Since 2009, Y Vote has stayed as one of the most impactful projects of AEGEE-Europe. Because beyond elections and voting turnout, beyond numbers and campaigns, Y Vote has always been about its people. If 2009 was about starting the conversation, 2014 about understanding it, and 2019 about acting on it, 2024 and 2025 are about making it ours, about making it heard across Europe.

“It’s hard, volunteering so many hours for so many months...we invested time, blood, sweat, tears, and even our parents’ houses for a while. But you will be so happy you did it. You pushed through, you saw the smiles, you saw the results, and you will come out a better version of yourself.”

This article is dedicated to all the young people who shaped Y Vote into what it is today, to its team members, local organisers, and participants! Thank you!

LISTEN TO THE YOUTH GOT A POINT PODCAST!



New episode every month





AEGEE TODAY

THE STRUCTURE OF AEGEE

AEGEE's structure is based on a Network of Locals, a bi-annual general assembly, a European Board of Directors working in Brussels, Commissions, Committees, Working Groups, Interest Groups and international Project Teams. Each of these bodies is reflected in the graphic below.

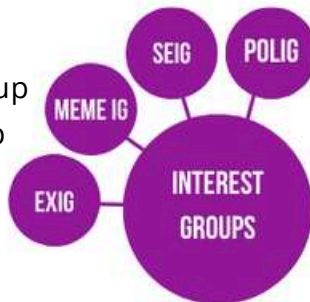
PROJECTS

- HRD:** Human Rights Day
- Y Vote:** Y Vote Project
- EoT:** Europe on Track
- AEGEE Day:** AEGEE Day
- SU:** Summer University



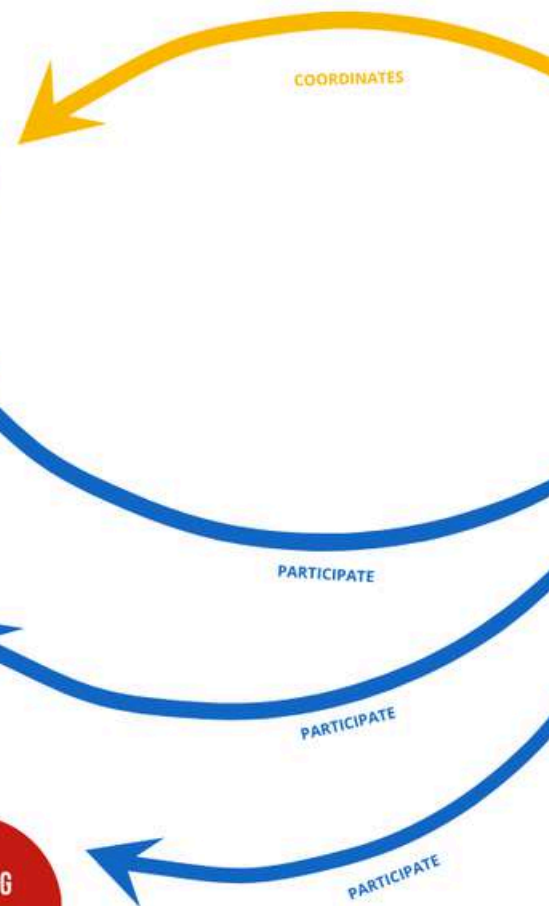
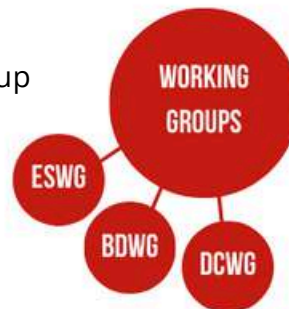
INTEREST GROUPS

- POLIG:** Politics Interest Group
- SEIG:** Social Equity Interest Group
- Meme IG:** Meme Interest Group
- EXIG:** Excel Interest Group



WORKING GROUPS

- ESWG:** Eco-Responsible Society Working Group
- BDWG:** Bridges of Dialogue Working Group
- DCWG:** Digital Culture Working Group



MEET THE EUROPEAN LEVEL OF AEGEE-EUROPE

PROJECTS



The **Summer University Project**, launched in 1988, brings together young people from different countries each summer. Through cultural exchange, shared experiences, and exploration of diverse traditions, participants immerse themselves in Europe's multicultural identity, break down barriers, and foster tolerance, openness, and active citizenship.



Europe on Track is an annual AEGEE-Europe project in which selected ambassadors travel across the continent by train, with the support of Interrail, to capture young people's visions for the future of Europe through photos, videos, and interviews.

The **Human Rights Day Project** is a network-wide initiative that aims to raise awareness about human rights and promote active citizenship among young people through events such as workshops, discussions, film forums, and awareness campaigns, creating spaces for dialogue on issues relevant to everyday life.



Y Vote is a Europe-wide campaign designed to empower young people to make informed decisions and actively participate in the democratic process, with a focus on elections. The project encourages youth not only to vote in local, national, and European elections, but also to engage in broader civic initiatives that create lasting impact across Europe.



AEGEE Day is a network-wide initiative that brings together AEGEE members across Europe to celebrate the diversity of our organisation. The project encourages our members to organise local activities on the same day.



INTEREST GROUPS



The Social Equity Interest Group (SEIG) empowers young people to recognise and challenge discrimination while promoting equity from an intersectional perspective. It provides an informal space for discussion and activities on human rights, migration, gender equality, and LGBTQIA+ issues, raising awareness and encouraging action for a more inclusive society.

The Excel Interest Group (EXIG) aims to promote the knowledge about and the use of Excel and other spreadsheets.

The Meme Interest Group (MEI) aims to promote the knowledge about and the use of memes.

The Language Interest Group (LIG) promotes multilingualism within AEGEE, helping members learn new languages and fostering discussion on language policies, minority languages, and linguistic diversity.

WORKING GROUPS 2023-2026



Bridges of Dialogue Working Group coordinates AEGEE's efforts in the Bridges of Dialogue focus area, supporting the Comité Directeur in achieving the Strategic Plan's objectives. It empowers young people to become ambassadors for peaceful dialogue, helping prevent and resolve societal conflicts.



Digital Culture Working Group coordinates AEGEE's work in the Digital Culture focus area, supporting the Comité Directeur in achieving the Strategic Plan's objectives. It empowers young people to contribute to a digital society that fosters responsible, open, and inclusive discourse.



Eco-Responsible Society Working Group coordinates AEGEE's efforts in the Eco-Responsible Society focus area, supporting the Comité Directeur in achieving the Strategic Plan's goals. It empowers young people to contribute to a society that respects planetary boundaries and promotes sustainability.



COMMISSIONS & OTHER BODIES



The Network Commission (NetCom) strengthens and supports AEGEE's network, acting as a bridge between AEGEE-Europe and Locals.

Working with the Network Director, commissioners assist new and struggling locals, motivate Antennae to grow, and organise Network Meetings (NWMs) to foster collaboration across the network.



The Juridical Commission (JC) ensures AEGEE-Europe operates according to its Statutes (CIA). It advises bodies and Antennae on legal matters, checks the conformity of Antennae Statutes, oversees the signing of the Convention d'Adhésion for new Antennae, and implements approved statutory modifications.



The Data Privacy Commission (DPC) helps AEGEE-Europe comply with the EU GDPR. It manages data flows, maintains a register of processing operations, develops breach procedures and third-party contracts, improves personal data exchange, and raises awareness on GDPR implementation within the Network.



The Mediation Commission (MedCom) offers neutral conflict management and mediation within AEGEE, aiming for reconciliation. It also serves as the ombudsman for cases concerning data privacy, being composed of four members, the Judicial Commission president, and a member of the Comité Directeur as observer.



The Audit Commission is responsible for auditing, checking, reporting, improving, and giving advice on the finances of AEGEE-Europe, AEGEE-Europe events, and the Antennae. They are also actively supporting Locals in improving the quality of their Financial Reports and creating a space for economic/financial discussions.



The Chair Team (CT) leads AEGEE-Europe's Agora, the organisation's statutory event. It includes the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson (managing and chairing the Agora), the Secretary (handling minutes), and the IT Responsible (managing event IT). They may be supported by Job Shadowers and Secretary Assistants.

COMMITTEES & OTHER BODIES



The Human Resources Committee (HRC) supports AEGEE's network in human resources management. It raises awareness of AEGEE identity, coordinates HR processes, ensures members gain essential skills through internal education, and provides mentoring and guidance to European Bodies, locals, and individuals.



The Sustainability Committee (SC) promotes a sustainable mindset across AEGEE-Europe, addressing climate and sustainability challenges. It measures AEGEE's environmental impact, improves sustainability standards, and educates and motivates the network to adopt sustainable practices in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.



The Events Quality Assurance Committee (EQAC) ensures high standards and impact for AEGEE events by managing the full assessment process, from event applications and organiser support to final evaluations after the event.



The Strategy Committee (StC) supports AEGEE-Europe in developing and implementing the Strategic Plan and Action Agenda. It monitors progress, coordinates internal dissemination, and measures and reports on the fulfillment of goals.



The Communications Committee (CC) is the body in charge of supporting AEGEE-Europe in tasks related to public relations, internal and external communication, and general promotion. It also supports the creation of Key2Europe.



The Information Technology Committee (ITC) supports AEGEE-Europe's IT needs, assisting users and maintaining hardware. It develops the new Online Membership System (OMS) and maintains the current membership system and mailing lists.



AEGEE Academy or The Training Committee is AEGEE-Europe's official pool of trainers, providing internal education for the network. It organises European Schools and other training courses throughout the year, supporting locals with trainers and training materials as needed.



The Policy Office brings together AEGEE's Policy Officers to coordinate policy and advocacy efforts with the Comité Directeur. Each Officer covers a Focus Area or relevant topic, representing AEGEE to politicians, decision-makers, and organisations, while creating projects and involving locals to elevate the network's policy and advocacy impact.



The Help Ukraine Taskforce supports AEGEE's network in raising awareness and providing aid to Ukraine and its citizens.



The Summer University Coordination Team (SUCT)

coordinates the Summer University Project, being in charge of the development of the project.



The Fundraising Committee supports the financial sustainability of AEGEE-Europe by providing help in institutional and corporate fundraising.



The Safe Person Committee aims to ensure AEGEE is a safe space for all its members and tackles sexual harassment in any form. It includes a pool of Safe Persons for AEGEE events.



Liaison Officers (LO) connect AEGEE-Europe with external organisations, maintaining communication, representing AEGEE, and promoting relevant actions, projects, and grant opportunities. They keep the Comité Directeur and Network informed about the organisation's policies, programs, and activities.

The Comité Directeur (CD) is AEGEE-Europe's executive board, managing the association and acting on its behalf. It coordinates the organisation and European Bodies, oversees and monitors the network, represents young people across Europe, inspires members toward a shared vision, and provides services to the network and youth throughout Europe.

**DID
YOU
KNOW?**



AEGEE FAIR

At every statutory event, the fair becomes a meeting point where the diversity of our network truly comes to life. European Bodies set up stands to present their work, share opportunities, and connect with members, while Locals bring a piece of their city through merchandise, from stickers and socks to sweets and even passports. It's a space where you can discover new opportunities and meet fellow AEGEEans from across Europe.

MAP OF THE NETWORK

AEGEE is present in 104 cities across 31 European countries. The westernmost local is AEGEE-Tenerife (Canary Islands), while the southernmost is AEGEE-Mağusa (Cyprus). The easternmost is AEGEE-Baki (Azerbaijan), and the northernmost is AEGEE-Joensuu (Finland), highlighting the network's wide geographical reach across Europe.



YOUR KEYS TO EUROPE

ANTENNAE

Aachen	Burgos	İzmir	Poznań
Alicante	Castelló	København	Praha
Amsterdam	Catania	Kraków	Salerno
Ankara	Delft	Leiden	Sofia
Antalya	Dresden	León	Stuttgart
Baki	Eindhoven	London	Tartu
Bamberg	Enschede	Mağusa	Tenerife
Barcelona	Erfurt	Moskva	Tilburg
Beograd	Eskişehir	Muğla	Torino
Bergamo	Firenze	Napoli	Treviso
Berlin	Gdańsk	Nijmegen	Udine
Bilbao	Gliwice	Niš	Utrecht
Brescia	Groningen	Novi Sad	Valencia
Brno	Hamburg	Osnabrück	Valladolid
Brussels-Bruxelles	Heidelberg	Oviedo	Warszawa
Bucureşti	Iaşi	Passau	Wien
Budapest	İstanbul	Pescara	Zaragoza

CONTACT ANTENNAE

Athina	Mannheim	Sankt-Peterburg
Chişinău	Maribor	Sheffield
Dublin	München	Stockholm
Hatay	Padova	Tarragona
Joensuu	Paris	Tbilisi
Kaiserslautern-Saarbrücken	Pisa	Thessaloníki
Madrid	Plzeň	Toulouse
Málaga	Rotterdam	Yerevan

CONTACTS

Bihać	Deventer	Quba	Veszprém
Bratislava	Oslo	Sarajevo	York
Denizli	Prishtina	Sumqayıt	

JOIN THE EUROPEAN LEVEL OF AEGEE

**COMMON OPEN CALL
STARTING ON THE 15TH OF
EACH MONTH**



THE THEMATIC PART OF AEGEE

As a youth organisation, AEGEE focuses on several topics in its thematic work, which are often defined as Focus Areas. The current Strategic Plan (2023-2026) defines the following 3 focus areas:

ECO-RESPONSIBLE SOCIETY



AEGEE empowers youth to build a society that respects the environment, addressing climate, pollution, biodiversity, and ocean health. Through the Sustainability Manifesto and as a founding member of Generation Climate Europe, the Network pushes for systemic change and supports young Europeans in contributing to sustainable development.

BRIDGES OF DIALOGUE



AEGEE encourages youth to act as ambassadors for peaceful dialogue, helping prevent and resolve societal conflicts. By creating spaces for mutual understanding, AEGEE encourages its Network to bridge and address generational and societal divides across Europe.

DIGITAL CULTURE



AEGEE promotes responsible and open digital participation, equipping youth with digital skills and a critical approach to data and social media. By fostering pluralism, freedom of speech, and engagement with digital tools, the network strengthens young people's voice in a connected Europe.

OTHER THEMATIC WORK



Additionally, AEGEE also works on other topics relevant to young people across Europe today, such as social equity and human rights, youth participation in democracy, mental health, and youth employment. These are often reflected in the work of various Interest Groups, European projects, and thematic events.

**IN THE
SPOTLIGHT**



**TRAINING EVENTS &
MODEL EUROPEAN UNION
IN 2025**

A group of people, including students and staff, are sitting in a circle on a lawn outdoors. Some are wearing t-shirts with logos, including one with a red square and the word 'ADDS'. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. At the bottom of the image, there are several overlapping, wavy, semi-transparent purple shapes. The text 'RAISING AWARENESS & ADVOCATING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS' is centered in white, bold, uppercase letters.

RAISING AWARENESS & ADVOCATING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

EUROPE ON TRACK 11: UNPACKING INTERSECTIONALITY ACROSS EUROPE

Every year, in AEGEE, a group of young ambassadors boards trains across Europe for one month, with a simple and powerful mission: to meet others, listen, connect, and amplify youth voices. This is **Europe on Track**, one of the longstanding projects of AEGEE-Europe, and in 2025, it just reached its 11th edition.

Ever since its first edition, Europe on Track has been empowering young people to raise awareness, take action, and advocate for a better Europe. For this year's edition, the focus was on **intersectionality** and its role in youth representation and civic engagement, responding to Europe's shifting socio-political landscape and the need for policies that acknowledge overlapping identities. Through workshops, conversations, and an 8-episode podcast, the ambassadors explored how overlapping identities such as race, gender, class, disability, and

sexuality shape the way young people experience Europe today.

"Our mission was simple but ambitious: empower young people to navigate intersectional identities and enable them to address the lack of youth representation and participation in European socio-political processes and decision-making."

Maddalena, Route Manager
of EoT11

> 70% OF PARTICIPANTS HAD LITTLE OR ONLY BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONCEPT OF INTERSECTIONALITY.

For Roberta, one of the ambassadors of the Red Route, the journey started long before she ever stepped on a train. She had been following the project for years, it always felt inspiring, but never the right time to join it. In her final year of university, she applied, being drawn by a topic that resonated deeply with her and the chance to combine education, creativity, and travel.



“Being a very hands-on person, I saw this project as a unique opportunity to combine several things I really enjoy: educating others on a topic I find important, creating social media content, and doing all of this while travelling across Europe with two other amazing and adventurous people who were brave enough (or possibly crazy enough) to apply as well.”

Roberta, ambassador of EoT11

What followed was a month on the road, across more than 20 cities, meeting over 600 young people. But the beginning? She still remembers being pretty nervous and just thinking, “Okay, we’re actually doing this”. Luckily, the local organisers in Izmir were very supportive, and they quickly realised that they worked surprisingly well together and that running workshops was actually a lot of fun, once the initial nerves wore off. Giving young people the space to speak up and seeing them feel safe enough to share



their stories made all the pre-workshop anxiety completely worth it.

For Virág, another ambassador of the Red Team, the journey felt almost inevitable. Ever since she joined AEGEE-Budapest in February 2022, and her Local organised a stop for EoT9, she knew that one day she would want to join the project.

“When I saw the Open Call for Europe on Track 11 Ambassadors, I knew that I had to apply. I felt that it was meant to be. It was the perfect adventure for me, I could expand my personal network in AEGEE even more, engage with like-minded young Europeans, and raise awareness on an incredibly important topic, intersectionality.”

What she found on the road was exactly what she had hoped for, and even more...not just workshops and discussions, but moments that couldn’t have been planned, such as staying in a church in Bergamo, meeting asylum-seekers through local NGOs, or visiting local governments. When talking about their final stop in Mannheim, she remembers how just a handful of participants engaged in a discussion that stayed with her long after the event was over. Interestingly, it was the same type of workshop as their first one, making them nostalgic already before the end of their full journey.

“The entire journey was pretty random, kind of a blur in a good way. Those few weeks were so filled with different interactions, long-lasting memories, and activities.”

RAISING AWARENESS & ADVOCATING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

And behind the scenes, the project team was building something just as meaningful. What started as a project about awareness became something deeper. The passion, the friendships, and the commitment the team found among each other and in AEGEE-Europe made them feel fortunate to have had the chance to work in such a stimulating environment.

“While we celebrated a long list of project successes, what I didn’t know I would gain were the personal growth and connections along the way. I found a family that had the same values, commitment and passion. I found a safe space where I could share my emotions. Even if we only met in person a couple of times, we created a special bond that enabled us not only to share the stress of the most heated moments of the project, but we were also able to learn from each other.

The ambassadors carried this same synergy into their workshops and interviews, creating safe spaces for others to learn and explore themselves and their knowledge on intersectionality.”

Maddalena, Route Manager EoT11

The biggest thing Europe on Track has to offer has always been the sense of community it creates. In Valencia, during a Human Library session, one participant approached Roberta hours later to say how much the experience had moved him. In other cities, young people opened up about discrimination, identity, and belonging, sometimes for the first time in their lives. For many, intersectionality was no longer just a concept. What was so motivating, almost electrifying, was to see how people opened up through their own personal interpretations

of the concept, put themselves into others’ shoes and left the workshop, interview or Instagram post they were engaged with with something meaningful.

EoT11 was not only thought-provoking but also tackled an incredibly important and underrepresented issue.

In the end, Europe on Track is not just about what it gives to others, it also changes those who take part in it. For Roberta, it was discovering resilience and how little she actually needed to feel fulfilled. For Virág, it was rediscovering creativity, capturing memories through journaling, and reflecting on her own path.





As the journey of Europe on Track 11 came to an end in 2025, it didn't really end at all for them. Both Roberta and Virág chose to continue, joining the next edition's team, determined to pass on the experience to others.

"While Europe on Track aims to teach and inform, it also creates space for mutual learning: you teach others, but you grow just as much yourself. That feeling of belonging to a motivated, open-minded, curious, and engaged community is what I'm most proud of, and what lasts long after the project ends."



The next edition is already on its way, this time focusing on eco-anxiety, another urgent topic shaping the lives of young Europeans today. New ambassadors will take the trains, new conversations will begin, and new stories will be written and shared across Europe. Because in the end, Europe on Track is not just about travelling across borders. It's connecting with people and topics that are so meaningful today, beyond different perspectives and personal identities.

If you want to know more about what we did, make sure to check our website to see their Results Booklet, Aftermovie, and Policy Paper Statement at www.europeontrack.org!



STANDING WITH UKRAINE: THE STORY OF AEGEE'S HELP UKRAINE TASKFORCE

This article was written by Leon and Nathan Kogel.

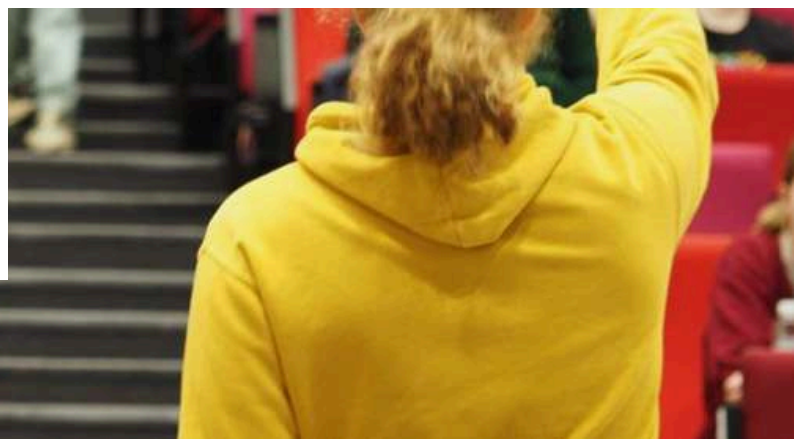
On 24 February 2022, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This brought war back to the heart of Europe, with cities across Ukraine being bombed, millions of people forced to flee their homes, and the country's infrastructure, economy, and communities deeply affected. At a time when many in the world had just stood by while the final Ukrainian defenders of Mariupol were killed or captured, for many AEGEEans, there was a deep feeling of helplessness as we saw everything AEGEE stands for under attack. However, that feeling also created a motivation within the Network to get out of the role of mere observers.

This is when **the Help Ukraine Taskforce** was created, starting its activities during Spring Agora Novi Sad 2022. At that time, members of AEGEE gathered in an open discussion session to collectively figure out how we, as AEGEE, can support Ukraine in its defence of democracy and its right to a self-determined, European future.

From this session emerged the two focal points that we, as the taskforce, still regard as our mission today:

- fundraising for humanitarian aid to Ukraine
- informing people within and outside of the network about Ukraine and the various ways we can help.

The urgency of the situation made it clear that coordinated action was needed, therefore the taskforce was born and has been active ever since. Another important goal for us was to use the platform AEGEE can provide to amplify and empower Ukrainian voices to be heard. Since we sadly don't have any Ukrainian Locals in the Network, we have always looked for Ukrainians as speakers and were fortunate to collaborate with many extraordinary people.



Today, the taskforce's active members include Charlotte Burkhard (AEGEE-Tartu, AEGEE-Dresden), Nathan Kogel (AEGEE-Aachen), Leon Kogel (AEGEE-Aachen, AEGEE-Hamburg), and our CD-appointed member, Wiktor Bogusz (AEGEE-Kraków). Recently, the team was also happy to welcome its newest member, Catherine de la Motte (AEGEE-Aachen). We also recognise, and we would like to thank the many members who contributed to the taskforce in previous years.



LOOKING BACK AT 2025

We began 2025 in January with "Pages of Unity". In this event, we learned about Ukrainian literature from our friend Anastasiia from Kyiv and compared it to literary works from all over the world, featuring Poland, Italy, Germany, etc. Through literature, the event created a space to connect cultures and reflect on shared European values.

Then, at Spring Agora Bilbao, we organised a joint fundraiser together with AEGEE-Kraków. We raised ca. 2100€ for humanitarian aid for Ukraine

and to help a member of AEGEE-Poznan who had had a tragic accident. Once again, thank you to everyone who contributed to this with money, ideas and effort. It showed how strong and empathetic AEGEE is. The fundraiser also included the return of the beloved flag auction, proving once again that AEGEEans are willing to creatively "punish" their friends who misplace their flags, for a good cause.

Beyond the fundraiser, we also organised a workshop about the role of women in Ukraine in wartime and beyond. In this, we looked at the development of gender equality in Ukraine throughout history, with the help of two women from Ukraine who shared their stories before and during the war. We also watched parts of a documentary about women serving in different branches of the Ukrainian army. We touched on a sensitive topic that left our participants with many new thoughts and perspectives. This workshop was also repeated online in cooperation with the Young European Ambassadors of EU Neighbours East, which became our most popular event to date, with close to 30 participants.



RAISING AWARENESS & ADVOCATING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

LOOKING FORWARD

In the future, we would like to increase our cooperation with Locals to lessen our reliance on online events. One example from last year where this worked tremendously was an interactive workshop on Ukraine's EU accession process that was held in Tartu last November. Aside from that, we definitely want to organise another fundraiser during the next Agora in Izmir. To this end, it is great that we just got a new member in Catherine, but if you (yes, you) are interested in the topic of helping Ukraine and would like to bring it closer to your fellow AEGEEans, you are always welcome to join us.

The war is still ongoing. On the 24th February 2026, it turned its 5th year! The war crimes continue. With temperatures dropping as low as -20°C, and Russia persisting in targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure, this year's winter has been the hardest of the war. This hits especially the most vulnerable people. We want to encourage you all, don't look away, and keep supporting Ukraine. At a time when discussions about potential peace plans dominate international headlines, it is more important than ever not only to talk about Ukraine but to listen to Ukrainians themselves. After all, it is their future that is at stake.



FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: HOW SEIG ADVOCATES FOR SOCIAL EQUITY IN AEGEE

What does it take for an organisation to become truly inclusive? Within AEGEE-Europe, this question has inspired action for years, through our Equal Rights and Social Equity focus areas. Following the path set by the previous Social Equity Working Group, two of its members, Anna Lena and Florina, wanted to carry that legacy and keep the conversation about tackling discrimination and human rights alive in AEGEE.

When the **Social Equity Interest Group (SEIG)** was created, it became more than an informal space for discussion, it became a team full of people interested in human rights, migration, gender equality, accessibility and LGBTQIA+ topics who could come together, not only to reflect on these but also to raise awareness about them. And 2025 has been one of their busiest years to date.

Last year, one of SEIG's strongest focuses was its series of social media campaigns and weekly online content on its Instagram account.

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX ED

After organising the 2024 Human Rights Day Project edition, SEIG started the year by continuing its campaign on raising awareness about comprehensive sexuality education in Europe. Building on their previous policy work and research on this topic, they used data and information in interactive visuals to break down stigma and give young people reliable details on a topic that is still widely misunderstood or overlooked. From posts about STDs to myths about sex ed and methods of contraception, the campaign aimed to create a space for more informed discussions about sexual and reproductive rights, health, and equality.



RAISING AWARENESS & ADVOCATING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

THE 16 DAYS CAMPAIGN

November brought one of SEIG's emblematic annual campaigns, the "16 Days of activism against violence against women", which this year was a shared effort across AEGEE, with Locals and European Bodies engaging, reposting and co-creating social media posts to address gender-based violence online. It once again reminded our Network that awareness is the first step towards change and becoming an inclusive organisation.



INTERSECTIONALITY MATTERS

At the same time, SEIG worked on making intersectionality more visible within AEGEE. Through the "Intersectionality Matters" campaign, created in collaboration with Europe on Track 11 and based on the project's results and surveys, they highlighted how different forms of discrimination are interconnected and how addressing them requires looking beyond single-issue perspectives. By translating policy outcomes into

interactive online content, the campaign demonstrated once again the importance of promoting social equity from an intersectional perspective, regardless of one's background.

TOWARDS MORE INCLUSIVE EVENTS

Beyond social media, SEIG has also played an important role in making AEGEE more inclusive from within. In collaboration with the Safe Person Committee, they developed practical guidelines on how to make events more inclusive, further integrated into briefings for statutory events and Summer Universities. In this way, SEIG's impact goes beyond awareness, towards making AEGEE safer and ensuring that inclusion is not only something we talk about, but something we actively practice.

WHAT'S NEXT?

SEIG is already looking forward to working on its campaigns for 2026. Because in the end, these campaigns were not only about bringing information to AEGEE and other young people, they are about connecting global issues to the lived experiences across Europe and to inspiring change. In a Europe marked by polarisation, discrimination, and ongoing human rights challenges, the role of spaces like SEIG becomes even more important. So if you are interested in getting involved, **join the Interest Group!**

A group of people in a meeting or conference, with several individuals raising their hands. The image is overlaid with a yellow filter. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRACY

EU YOUTH DIALOGUE: CONNECTING EU WITH YOUTH

*This article was written by Teddy van Amelsvoort,
our Liaison Officer towards the EU Youth Dialogue.*

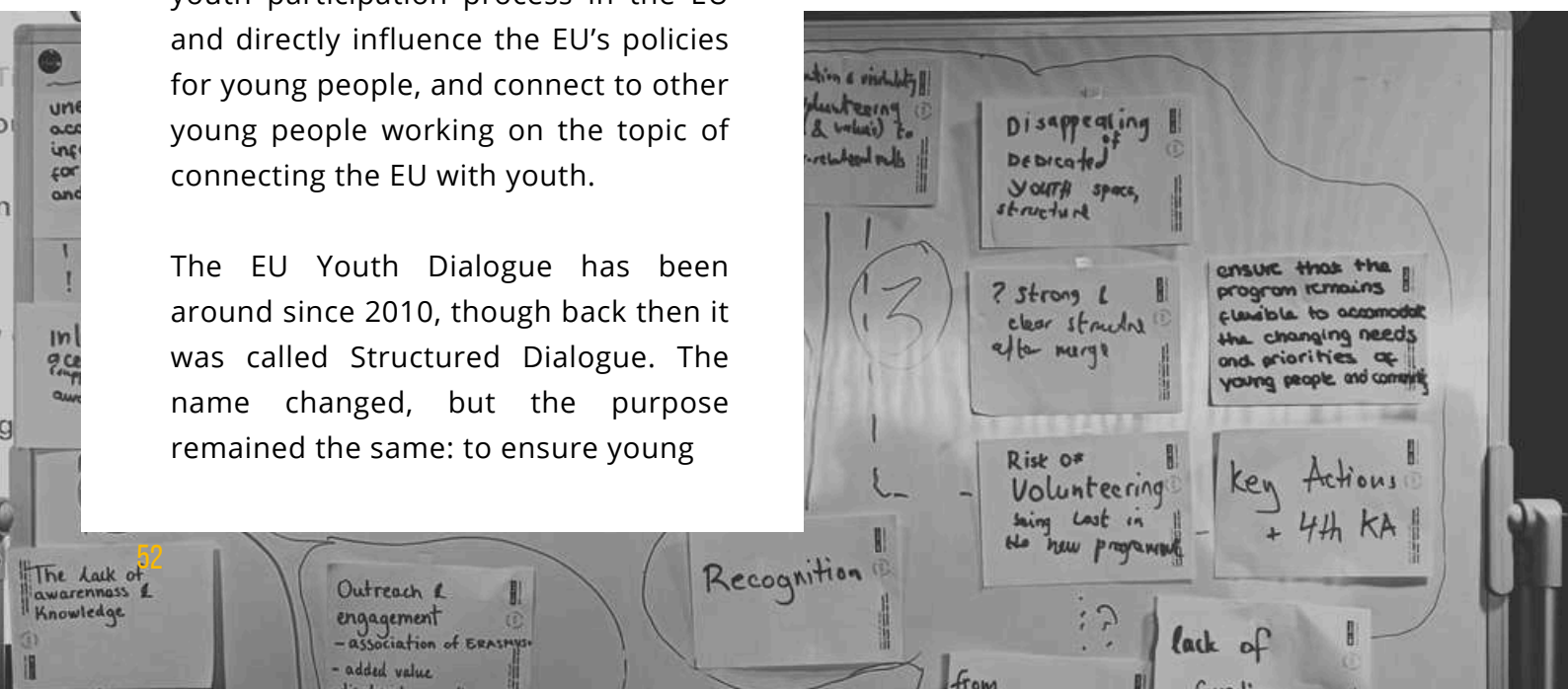
So many young people lack trust in the EU, finding it difficult to understand how it functions and based on what values and principles it works, leading to euroscepticism among them. Yet it is important that young people trust the EU and understand how it works; they should feel part of the EU, and bridges should be built to regain their trust and increase their participation. Making sure that young voices are heard on the European level is something close to AEGEE's heart. That is why we applied to become **one of the five International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations for the EU Youth Dialogue 11th cycle**, to contribute to the largest youth participation process in the EU and directly influence the EU's policies for young people, and connect to other young people working on the topic of connecting the EU with youth.

The EU Youth Dialogue has been around since 2010, though back then it was called Structured Dialogue. The name changed, but the purpose remained the same: to ensure young

people's perspectives were included in policy-making. This is not the first time we have been involved in the Structured Dialogue; we attended numerous Youth Conferences and tried to consolidate the role of INGYOs within the Dialogue.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The EU Youth Dialogue gives young people the opportunity to take part in European decision-making processes and offers them the space to voice their views to policymakers. The EU Youth Dialogue is not just a farce; it has been responsible for creating the **European Youth Goals**, a set of 11



priorities that guide European policy processes. This cycle has been focusing on ensuring young people have a meaningful say in all stages of EU decision-making by improving current ways and creating new ones, increasing transparency and visibility in the EU to address the democratic gaps, and exploring how EU policies can be more youth-friendly and impactful.



HOW DOES THE EU YOUTH DIALOGUE WORK?

In cycles of 18 months, the focus is on one key topic that matters to young people in Europe. This time, it is about **connecting the EU with youth**. Each cycle has two phases: the consultation phase, where voices are collected, and the implementation phase, where ideas are turned into action. The process is led by three consecutive EU Council Presidencies that work together. Every Presidency organises a EU Youth Conference (about every six months), creating a space for dialogue between young people and policy makers. In this cycle, input was gathered from young people on EU

values and principles, and practical discussions and recommendations were drafted on how to enhance the connection between youth and EU programmes, like Erasmus+, before we delve into specific policy recommendations that strengthen youth engagement and trust in the EU.

WHAT HAS AEGEE BEEN DOING SO FAR?

During the consultation phase, AEGEE has given an **expert statement** on what actions we believe need to be taken to ensure that all young people in the EU feel a sense of belonging to Europe and of being a part of the EU, make sure all people in the EU share common EU values, build trust between young people and democracy within the EU, make sure all new laws, policies and decisions are youth friendly and make better use of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes to support young people to become active citizens.



AEGEE has also been present at the EU **Youth Conference in København**, as an expert on how the future Erasmus+ 2028 - 2034 should support youth volunteering and solidarity in Europe,

PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRACY

talking with other young people and EU Commissioners. In the future, we will give our insights on the direct implementations we have undertaken to connect young people with the EU, and attend the youth conference in Cyprus to make policies more youth-friendly.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED?

You can get involved in different ways; you can get in contact with the Liaison Officers who can consider your input while representing AEGEE at the EU

Youth Dialogue. You can also get in contact with your National Youth Council and ask how to get involved in the EU Youth Dialogue and National Working Groups to represent your country at the EU Youth Conferences. Most often, there will be opportunities to get involved in the national consultations organised by your National Youth Council.

And most importantly, spread the word and get your fellow AEGEEans to participate in the process.



BREAKING WALLS, BUILDING EUROPE, BRIDGING GENERATIONS

40 YEARS OF AEGEE-EUROPE AND 36 YEARS OF AEGEE-SALERNO

This article was written by Federico Melella, member of AEGEE-Salerno.

Every year, on May 9th, Europe celebrates being united in diversity, and for AEGEE, this day has an even deeper meaning, one rooted in decades of connecting young people across borders with the European spirit. In 2025, **AEGEE-Salerno** marked this moment with an event, by not only celebrating Europe Day, but also 40 years of AEGEE-Europe and 36 years of active local youth engagement. This event took place at Sala Marcello Torre of Palazzo Sant'Agostino in Salerno, a venue that reflects the rich cultural vibrations that AEGEE strives to spread across Europe.

The event started with a formal yet warm atmosphere, where participants of diverse ages gathered to reflect on the European integration journey.

The programme began with institutional greetings from Francesco Morra, the Provincial Councilor for Culture, who mentioned Salerno's commitment to the spirit of European integration. Vincenzo Ianniello, President of AEGEE-Salerno, presented the association's identity, mission, and future perspectives, emphasising its significant role in promoting European values and fostering student mobility, either with the Erasmus+ programmes, or with the AEGEE initiatives, like Summer Universities.

Inspiring speeches followed, with speakers such as Alfonso Giordano and Giovanni Ragone narrating AEGEE-Salerno's rich history. Their words moved beyond formality, bringing back the energy, challenges, and passion of



PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRACY

the young people in the earlier years. Alfonso and Giovanni traced an emotional narration of AEGEE-Salerno through the years, in particular Alfonso showed how difficult was organising an Agora and a Summer University in 1989, without mobile phones, internet connection, and modern technologies. In fact the only possibility was waiting for participants at the Central Station of Salerno, according to the transport schedule, while Giovanni remarked how AEGEE stands out as an association to let people, from Europe and beyond, discover the culture and the food of Salerno and its nearbies, showcasing the excellence of the industries and factories of our territories (mozzarella factories, ferries, oil making, ...).



Then, Mariarosaria Colucciello discussed the synergies between AEGEE and the University of Salerno in internationalization projects, which fit perfectly in the Neolaia alliance of Universities, and referencing their collaboration on the book "Raccontami Erasmus", which was a contest held in 2023 for the publication of this

book that tells about the experiences of Erasmus students.

Professor Giuseppe Foscari brought a broader perspective, reminding everyone that while Europe has achieved much, it also faces complex challenges. The message was clear: building Europe is an ongoing process, one that requires awareness, responsibility, and active participation, especially from young people.

"There were two rewarding moments: the first one being when, after all the speeches, Prof. Foscari gave us his unconditional support to bring AEGEE-Salerno back to the university; the second one being when we showed our new office at Palazzo D'Avossa to our honorary members."

After the conference, some participants stepped into another chapter of AEGEE-Salerno's story with a visit to its new office at Palazzo D'Avossa, a historic building once connected to figures like Giuseppe Garibaldi. There, two honorary members, Federico Carbone and Sonia Della Sala, were recognised, celebrating their long-standing contribution to AEGEE-Salerno.



But as with any AEGEE event, the day did not end with speeches. By 8pm, the participants, together with the long-time members Federico Melella, Raffaele Brillantino and the current president of AEGEE-Salerno, Vincenzo Ianniello, went to Fondazione Copernico, a place reserved thanks to the collaboration with Limen, a youth association in Salerno, where Erasmus students brought all the dishes they prepared, for a nice European (and beyond) night. From Turkey to Taiwan, from Germany to Spain, they turned the space into a small reflection of Europe itself.

“We took a really great group picture at the end and we had the chance to meet a lot of nice people through this event, which will be a gem in the memories of AEGEE-Salerno.”

After all, this was not a one-time celebration. AEGEE-Salerno has long been creating spaces for dialogue, from Europe Cafés to film screenings

focused on social and geopolitical issues. And the story continues. In March 2026, the Local organised another event, a roundtable on Europe’s evolution from Maastricht to Kyiv, highlighting the role of youth in shaping its future. The day combined debate, celebration, and community, from discussions with journalists and academics, to anniversary cake, new honorary members, karaoke, and language clubs, all hosted in a unique social hub set in a former church.

And if there is one lesson to take from Salerno, it is this:

AEGEE is built by people.

And every member, past or present, has the power to shape what comes next. So reach out to your honorary members and alumni for organising similar events, and don’t forget to bring a little bit of the AEGEE Spirit into what you do!



**IN THE
SPOTLIGHT**



**EUROPEAN PLANNING
MEETING İSTANBUL**

CONNECTING PEOPLE & CULTURES ACROSS BORDERS

A group of people in winter gear standing in a snowy mountain landscape, with one person in the center raising their arms in celebration. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The background shows a snowy mountain range with evergreen trees. In the foreground, several people are visible, some holding ski poles. One person in the center-right is standing with their arms raised in a celebratory gesture. The overall mood is joyful and active.

A SUMMER WITHOUT BORDERS: SUMMER UNIVERSITIES IN 2025

There is something about summer in AEGEE that always feels different, because it is the time when borders don't exist, cultures meet, and strangers become friends.

12 SUMMER UNIVERSITIES

took place in 2025, when AEGEE Locals opened their countries to **over 250 participants** from across Europe. For more than 40% of them, this was their first Summer University, for others, it was a great opportunity to meet AEGEEans and discover new cities. Here are some highlights from 2025:

During AEGEE-Baki's "**Beat the Heat Vol. IV**", participants explored local traditions through music, dance, language, and calligraphy workshops. They also hiked in the Caucasus Mountains and wandered through the historic streets of Baku, while also learning more about Azerbaijani folklore and about the country's diverse ethnic and religious communities.

In Brescia, the SU "**Brixtreme: Spirit of Adventure**" combined nature and culture. Participants explored lakes and mountains, discovered Roman history, and enjoyed social evenings together. One of the highlights was hiking to the largest lake island in Europe, alongside visits to a theme park and ancient ruins.



Meanwhile in **Istanbul**, participants explored the city through a treasure hunt, getting lost (and found again) in its streets. The programme mixed cultural workshops, like Turkish coffee and language sessions, with discussions on sustainability, as well as fun activities such as boat parties on the Bosphorus. A similar journey took place in **Ankara**, where participants experienced a traditional Turkish night,



visited a hammam, and explored local coffee shops.



AEGEE-Sofia's "**Bulgarian Symphony: Ancient Cities and Modern Sounds**" offered a rich mix of history, landscapes, and creativity. Participants joined traditional dance workshops and even took part in a mosaic-making session at the iconic Buzludzha monument.



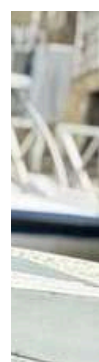
In **Catania**, the experience was all about food and culture, as participants learned how to cook authentic Italian dishes while also reflecting on Sicilian stereotypes and local traditions.

And in Tartu, the SU "**We're not made of SUGar: Survivors of the forEST**" offered a completely different kind of adventure. Focused on nature and personal growth, participants explored forests, developed green skills, and connected with Estonian traditions, making it a journey of self-discovery as much as exploration.



JOIN A SUMMER UNIVERSITY IN 2026!

Spend **up to 2 weeks** exploring new cities, meeting people from across Europe and making lifelong memories!



ON THE RAILS TO EPM ISTANBUL: MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS

Statutory events such as the European Planning Meeting (EPM) and Agorae are AEGEE's biggest events that we look forward to every year. But did you know that you can start your journey to them earlier? In 2025, AEGEE-Budapest, AEGEE-București, and AEGEE-Sofia organised **"Pre-EPM On The Rails: Murder on the Orient Express"**, a collaboration that started in a spontaneous conversation during Agora Novi Sad.

"We were shouting 'AEGEE-Istanbul!' during the plenary. And then we just thought, why not help them? Istanbul is far, but Budapest is easier to reach. Within minutes, we already had the concept. Bucharest was already part of the plan, so we reached out to AEGEE-Sofia, as they were planning a similar event."

Máté, organiser from AEGEE-Budapest

What followed was not just an event, but a journey, literally. The plan was simple in theory, but bold in reality, showcasing what AEGEE has always been about: a four-day train journey from Budapest to Istanbul, with stops in Bucharest and Sofia, combining intercultural exchange, workshops, and a shared, unforgettable travel experience.



"It was a beautiful cooperation where we could promote cooperation between Locals and show a probably less-known part of Europe."



The group was also very diverse, from Italian, Ukrainian, Croatian, Spanish, German, Polish, Turkish, to Austrian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Romanian nationalities, with a total of over 25 participants and organisers.

The itinerary made the theme of the event obvious, being inspired by the title of an Agatha Christie mystery novel set aboard the Orient Express, which travels from Istanbul to Paris through Europe. And with all that time spent on the train, participants didn't just travel, they became part of the story, a live-action murder mystery across train carriages, with improvised games held mid-journey.



"With 27 people, holding a trial on a train was... challenging, but that's what made it memorable."

Each stop along the way came with its own activities and cultural experiences. The participants joined workshops about the Balkan region and about EPM, city tours, treasure hunts and parties. Beyond the fun and the trip itself, the event carried a clear message that travel can be done

differently. Sustainability was not just a theme, but something we have been trying to embrace in AEGEE for years. As a result, participants were encouraged to choose trains over flights to attend the event, and the journey itself proved that sustainable travel can bring so much more to your experience.



"If you travel by train with others, it gives you the option to see so much more of Europe, having inspiring conversations and seeing places along the way that you would have otherwise not seen during your journey."

Xenia, organiser from
AEGEE-Budapest

As for their favourite memories, for some, it was dancing to Tunak Tunak in the train. For others, it was late-night card games, or finally meeting co-organisers in person after months of planning. And for some...maybe a secret deal with a train conductor involving rakia and train carriages. Would they do it again? **Yes, for sure!** An Agora in Budapest is coming in 2025, so who knows, maybe next time, they will do it in reverse, from Istanbul to Budapest!

TWIN ANTENNAE IN ACTION: AEGEE-TORINO & AEGEE-BAMBERG

This article was written by Yannic Rigamonti, a member of AEGEE-Torino.

Some partnerships are planned, others simply happen, and somehow they turn into something much bigger.

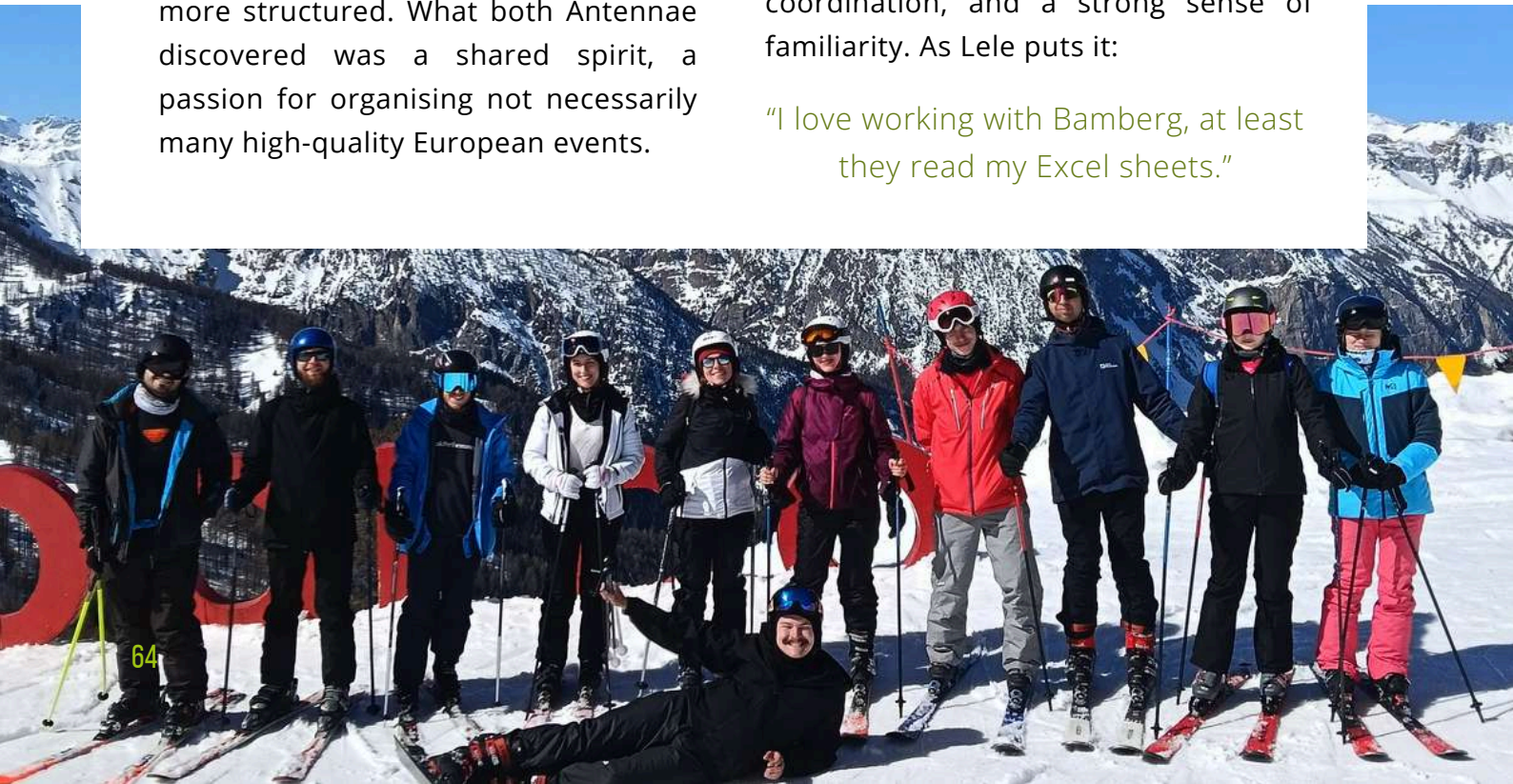
The twinning between **AEGEE-Torino** and **AEGEE-Bamberg** began quite organically. Years ago, a participant from Bamberg joined a Summer University in Turin and fell in love with the city, the atmosphere, and maybe even a few people. Rumour has it that the story even made its way into a larger German newspaper (see if you can find it). Later, after COVID, members from Torino visited Bamberg, building strong friendships that naturally evolved into something more structured. What both Antennae discovered was a shared spirit, a passion for organising not necessarily many high-quality European events.

WHAT DOES IT ACTUALLY MEAN TO BE TWIN ANTENNAE?

In simple terms, it is an official partnership, a kind of “**contracted friendship**”. While many Antennae collaborate informally, twinning formalises the bond. This official status encourages deeper cooperation, continuity over time, and helps new members immediately feel connected to another local abroad.

The benefits quickly became evident. Organising international events is much easier when you already have a trusted partner: more helping hands, smoother coordination, and a strong sense of familiarity. As Lele puts it:

“I love working with Bamberg, at least they read my Excel sheets.”



At the same time, this collaboration allows for creative and cross-cultural experiences, such as their Winter University, which blended Italian mountain flair with German culture, combining smooth efficiency with a touch of joyful chaos.

“Coming from Germany and being part of AEGEE Torino, this partnership was literally my dream. I think both cultures really shine coming together with the other.”

Yannic, AEGEE-Torino



Among many shared experiences in 2025, one moment stands out. During the Winter University, the Italian organisers surprised Isa from Bamberg with custom-made T-shirts: she was portrayed as a queen, surrounded by the playful chaos of the Torino team. The slogan? **“I bimbi di Isa”...“Isa’s children”**. It perfectly captures the spirit of the partnership: affectionate, humorous, and deeply connected.

Despite the distance, the two Antennae stay closely connected

through exchanges, joint organising, and constant communication. And, of course, friendships go beyond formalities, as there is always time for a bit of cross-border gossip.



Looking ahead, the partnership is far from slowing down. New ideas are already on the table: What would you think about “Autumn University - an Italian weekend at German beer festivals”? Their advice for other Locals considering a similar path is simple: organise together. Shared experiences, especially the challenging ones, create the strongest bonds. And most importantly: have fun along the way!

TWIN ANTENNAE (2025)

AEGEE-Maribor & AEGEE-Novı Sad
April 2024 - April 2025

AEGEE-Eindhoven & AEGEE-Tartu
April 2025 - April 2026

AEGEE-Budapest, AEGEE-Istanbul & AEGEE-Kraków
April 2025 - April 2026

AEGEE-Heidelberg & AEGEE-Nijmegen
April 2025 - April 2026

AEGEE-Bamberg & AEGEE-Torino
April 2025 - April 2026

AEGEE-Delft & AEGEE-Passau
April 2025 - November 2026

BRINGING EUROPE CLOSER TO YOUTH

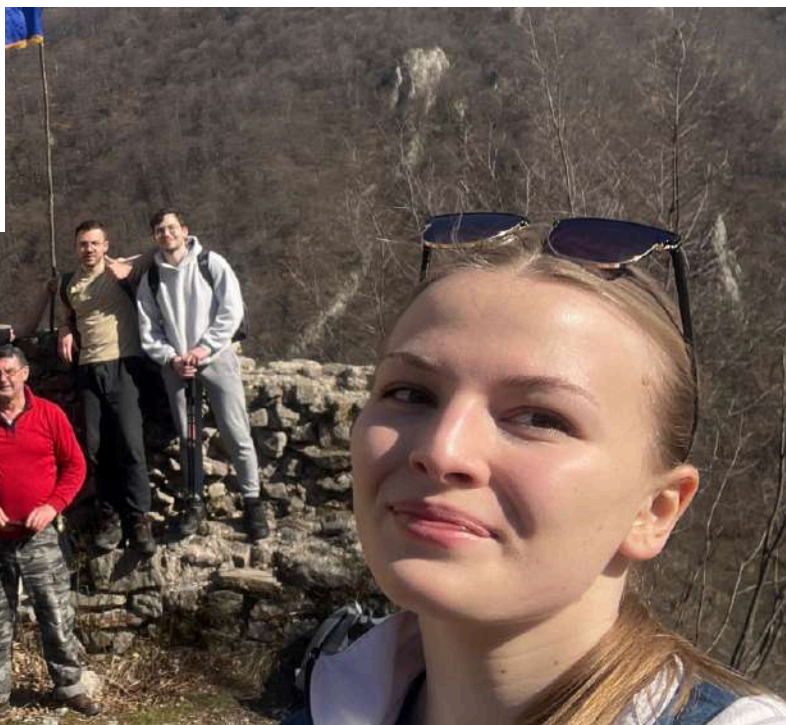
MEET OUR NEW CONTACT IN SARAJEVO

In 2025, we celebrated 40 years of AEGEE. But do you know how your Local was created? This year, we had the privilege to see history in the making, and we're taking you with us to discover **the story of our new Contact in Sarajevo**.

In late 2024, a group of young people in Sarajevo first heard about AEGEE through friends. The idea of creating something new in their city, something that would connect local students while opening doors to Europe, felt exciting. Some of them had already experienced international projects and student exchanges before, and they saw how transformative those experiences can be.

"At first it was just an idea, something that maybe would never happen, but to our surprise, it slowly turned into a real project people were excited about and eager to join in."

For the team in Sarajevo, the biggest challenge was probably starting something from scratch. They had to build a team, introduce AEGEE to a city that had never heard of it, and discover how to organise events, step by step, learning along the way. It meant showing up, explaining, convincing, and sometimes just hoping people would believe in the same vision. And then they did exactly that! The Contact was founded by **a small group of motivated young people** - Adela Mujezinović, Ella Alihodžić, Tesnim Mašić, Tea Čolić, Đenana Halilović and Kenan Peljto. Their first meet-up was in early September, and they have already grown to 28 active members in total, forming a community that continues to expand with every new activity.



For the founders, bringing AEGEE to Sarajevo was never just about creating another student organisation. They wanted to feel a gap, in a city where more opportunities for international networking, intercultural learning, and non-formal education are needed.

“AEGEE offers a unique European perspective and a strong international community. We believed that bringing AEGEE to our city could help connect local students with peers across Europe and open doors to experiences they might not otherwise have.”

When did the idea become reality? For them, that moment came on 11 February 2025, when they officially became a Contact. Then attending their first Spring Agora, in Bilbao, made them realise that they were truly part of a large European network.

“When we received the confirmation, we were proud because it meant that our efforts had been recognised and that we were now officially part of the AEGEE network. It also motivated us even more to continue developing our local activities.”



From organising their first international activity, a “Mini European School on How to Run a Youth NGO”, to hosting local events like game nights, quiz nights, and even a hike to Bobovac Castle, the Contact quickly found its rhythm. “We have found that it truly helps bring students together, not only to relax after exams but also to mingle and have fun.” They also made their presence known in the local community, participating in local initiatives and advocating for student mobility in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



In the future, the team hopes to grow their membership, organise more events, and see more students from Sarajevo take part in international AEGEE activities. And for anyone thinking about starting something similar, their message is simple:

“Go for it. Starting something new is challenging, but incredibly rewarding. Through AEGEE you meet inspiring people, gain new skills, and become part of a European community that values cooperation, openness, and youth engagement. If you have the motivation and a supportive team, it is absolutely worth the effort.”

**IN THE
SPOTLIGHT**



**STRATEGIC PLANNING
MEETING DELFT**

ESTIEM AND AEGEE: ONE AND A HALF YEARS OF BEING PARTNERS

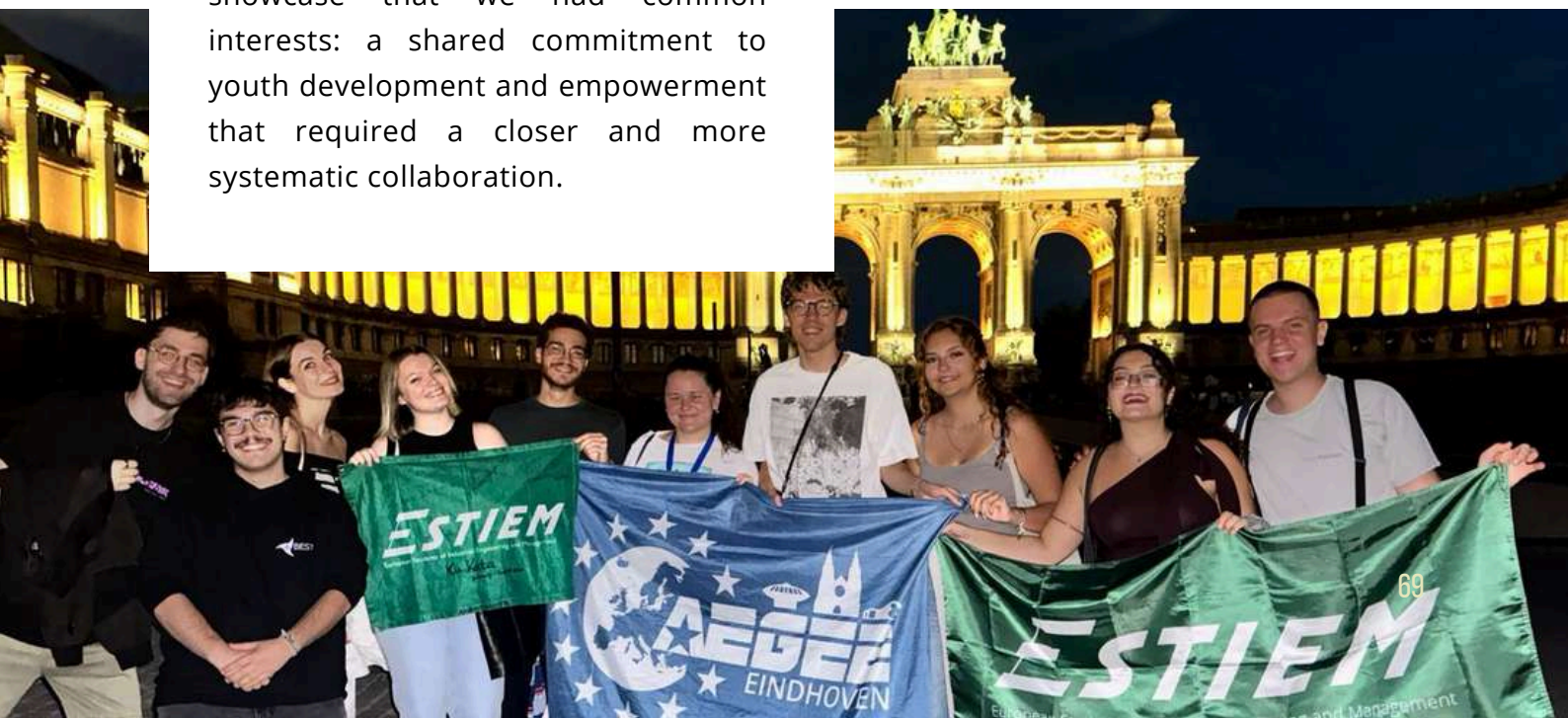
This article was written by Teddy van Amelsvoort, our Liaison Officer towards ESTIEM.

This story started, like many meaningful collaborations do, long before it had a name. Across Europe, in different cities and at different events, members of **AEGEE** and **ESTIEM** kept meeting, sometimes as participants, other times as organisers, as young people driven by the same willingness to share ideas and, who knows, turn them into small collaborations. You might be surprised to learn that, despite the collaborations AEGEE and ESTIEM have undertaken before, our partnership was only made official at the **Spring Agora in Novi Sad 2024**.

But what does it mean to be partners? By becoming partners, we wanted to showcase that we had common interests: a shared commitment to youth development and empowerment that required a closer and more systematic collaboration.

And what about ESTIEM?

ESTIEM is a non-profit, non-political organisation for European Students of Industrial Engineering and Management, who combine technological understanding with management skills. Their mission is to connect and support the growth and sustainability of European associations of IEM students, fostering relations and developing their IEM students, both personally and professionally. They focus on a variety of events related to the academic, career, intercultural, and personal development of their members, with some even being open to AEGEEans. Being partners, we believe, is more than exchanging



CONNECTING PEOPLE & CULTURES ACROSS BORDERS

knowledge and sending participants to each other's (strategic) events, it is also about starting new initiatives that develop youth and our organisations.



OUR COLLABORATION IN 2025

With countless emails, meetings, work being done, and laughter during all of it, there are two things about 2025 that must be highlighted for sure:

THE FIRST EVER AMBASSADOR HANDOVER

2025 marked the first-ever edition of the ambassador handover event. What started as a joking initiative turned into reality in just a few months. For five days, ambassadors from AEGEE, BEST, ESTIEM, and EESTEC came together to learn, share experiences, and build connections under the guidance of current and former board members of AEGEE, BEST, and ESTIEM. All with the aim to increase our impact throughout the year and set the stage for amazing journeys.

The agenda mixed learning with practice, and of course, fun. Throughout the event, new

ambassadors were trained on essential ambassador skills like External Relations 101, Public Speaking & Presenting, and, of course, networking. We also explored bigger topics, such as Grants and Advocacy, while exchanging knowledge about our respective networks. Each discussion sparked ideas for collaborations, from ambitious projects involving all NGOs to smaller initiatives between two partners. Most importantly, we had the time and space to think about concrete next steps while building genuine friendships along the way. No AEGEE-organised event is complete without an International Night or equivalent. To continue the cosy atmosphere, we ended the event with an International Dinner, cooking and baking dishes from our home countries right at the AEGEE House. Unsurprisingly, the evening ended with noise complaints and a lot of confusion about each other's dances.

Looking back, **the Ambassador Handover Event** was an inspiring start to our mandates. It gave us knowledge, tools, and friendships to build on, and it set the stage for collaborations with our partner networks right from the beginning. And the past conclusion? A 2026 edition is a must!

LOCAL COLLABORATION GUIDELINES

Another ambitious project was to create local collaboration guidelines to inspire the local branches of our

respective Networks to reach out to one another for a collaboration.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

We may not be able to predict the future, but we are sure that the collaboration will not end in 2025. There are already a lot of initiatives planned, including BAESTIEMEC: a collaborative bringing together BEST, AEGEE, EESTEC, and ESTIEM, with the main focus on structured knowledge sharing and inter-organisational learning. The goal of BAESTIEMEC is not only to share experiences but to enable participants to return to their

Local Groups with concrete ideas, new perspectives, and practical tools for further development within AEGEE. Additionally, we have been working on a way to create a trainers map to facilitate more trainer exchanges across our Networks on a local level, provide more opportunities for organising local training events, as local groups can reach out to trainers located near them; and provide more opportunities for trainers who may have challenges to develop themselves as trainers, as they cannot travel to international events within their organisation.



**IN THE
SPOTLIGHT**



SPRING AGORA BILBAO

A group of diverse people are sitting on the floor in a circle, smiling and talking. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The text "2025 IN EVENTS" is centered in white, bold, uppercase letters.

2025 IN EVENTS

BEHIND THE GAVEL

MEET THE PEOPLE WHO HOLD THE AGORA TOGETHER

When you think about an Agora, our General Assembly, you're probably imagining a full plenary room, long discussions, voting, and lots and lots of important decisions. But behind every agenda, plenary, and prytanium, there is a team making it all happen. Meet **the Chair Team**, the people holding our Agorae together.

FROM SHY BEGINNINGS TO CHAIRING THE PLENARY

For many of them, the journey started in unexpected ways. Martyna joined AEGEE in 2020, during the online era, looking for something to fill her student life. "Believe it or not, but at that time, I was terrified to speak in front of 30 people", she recalls. A few years later, she would be chairing

entire Agorae. David's story is just as fast-paced: "I joined AEGEE, and fifteen days later I became the president of my Local". This eventually led him to the European level and then to the Chair Team. And for Alek, it all started with curiosity and a challenge.

"I thought I could try something outside my comfort zone. What I didn't know is how much you actually grow and the friendships you build along the way."

WHAT PEOPLE DON'T SEE

From the outside, chairing might look like standing confidently in front of hundreds of people. But what most don't see is everything happening behind the scenes.



“It’s a lot of work before the Agora even starts, preparing sessions, planning for unexpected situations, coordinating with participants, organisers, presenters and different bodies. At the same time (even though it is in the name) people very often don’t realise that we very much work together as a team and rely on and support each other a lot.”



And it doesn’t stop when Agora begins. There’s also a lot happening outside the plenary room. That’s why having a team you can rely on is so important, because, despite the name, Chair Team is never about one person, it’s about constant coordination, support, and trust. As Alek recalls, “**What I think people don’t see about being in Chair Team is that the Chairpersons actually do smile and have a lot of great time together with the team**”.

CHALLENGES, A BIT OF CHAOS... AND GROWTH

For Martyna, Spring Agora Novi Sad 2024 was a defining moment, as her first time as Chairperson. For Alek, the same Agora meant stepping up

beyond expectations and taking on more responsibility than planned. David felt luckier, as his first offline Agora took place in a familiar city, in Bilbao, with friends among the organisers and no language barriers. But every Agora brings its own challenges, and sometimes, the challenges are the ones you don’t expect, like managing an online Agora on a borrowed laptop with a completely different keyboard. Chairing an offline Agora means reading the room, with its body language, reactions, tension, and energy. Online, everything changes. Still, the team has always adapted, because whether online or offline, the essence remains the same: teamwork.



2025 was about offline and online Agorae, each bringing its own memorable moments. When asked about the moments that stayed with them, during the Spring Agora in Bilbao, one of the highlights was seeing a full room for the Newbies session, an encouraging sign of how many participants were eager to engage, learn, and prepare for the discussions ahead. For the team, the Closing Plenary also stood out as a moment to

2025 IN EVENTS

reflect, to thank everyone involved, and to look ahead to the future of AEGEE. Of course, “every moment feels intense” as Martyna shared, but it was a kind of pressure the team had learned to handle through preparation and trust in one another.



The Autumn Agora, held online, brought a completely different dynamic. Without being physically together, the team had to rely on constant communication to stay coordinated and support each other. But even across screens and distances, the Chair Team remains just that, a team, ready to step in, adapt, and support one another at any moment.

THE MOMENT IT ENDS

When the gavel finally comes down and the Agora is officially closed, you might think the work is over. Yes, there is a moment, a brief, emotional, and well-earned one, when the team takes a deep breath, laughs a little and lets that built-up stress go away. For Martyna, it's about something else too:

“Hugging the team and looking back at what we achieved together.”

After years in the Chair Team, what stays is not just the experience, but the people you work with along the way. “I’m most proud of the teams I worked with” Martyna reflects at the end of her journey, “I hope they look back at it with a sense of growth”. And for those continuing the story, the goal is clear. “I just hope to be as good a leader and friend as I have been”, Alek says.

YOU CAN BE PART OF THE TEAM!

So... why join the Chair Team?

“Just do it. Apply apply apply!”

Because in the end it's an incredible experience, where you'll grow more than you expect and through which you will see the Agora from a completely different perspective. And maybe most importantly: You'll never regret it.



**IN THE
SPOTLIGHT**



**NETWORK MEETINGS &
REGIONAL TRAINING COURSES**

WINTER MADNESS VOL. VIII: STARTING THE YEAR THE AEGEE WAY

What if the new year didn't begin with resolutions but with AEGEEans? With having fun on unfamiliar streets that somehow feel like home, with music, late-night conversations, and that feeling that only AEGEE can create, when strangers from all over Europe turn into friends before midnight. For many years, AEGEE has been organising New Year's Eve Events, and **Novi Sad** has always been the place to be during that evening! For the eighth year in a row, in 2025, AEGEE-Novu Sad brought this feeling to life with **"Winter Madness Vol. VIII: Birthday Edition"**, a New Year's Eve event that has become more than just a celebration, it's a tradition now.

"We chose the 'Birthday Edition' theme because the event has become a cornerstone of our calendar, and we wanted to celebrate the milestone of AEGEE - Novi Sad and the birth of new friendships that happen every year."

For seven days, Novi Sad turned into a space where cultures met, stories were shared, and every moment felt like part of something bigger. From themed parties and cultural workshops to wine tastings, a city tour, and even ice skating, the programme had everything that makes AEGEE events unforgettable.

This year's edition was indeed different. Not only did it mark the start of 2025, but it also celebrated 30 years of AEGEE-Novu Sad.



This year, 32 participants from 10 different countries came together to celebrate. Some were returning, others were experiencing it for the first time, but by the end of the week, that difference didn't matter anymore.

"In AEGEE, you aren't just sitting at home making to-do lists or spreadsheets for the new year.

Instead, you are diving headfirst into the year with a mix of old friends you haven't seen in ages and brand-new faces."

And how was it behind the scenes? The biggest challenge was the timing, as New Year's is when people are usually with their families. While their organising team was smaller than usual, this didn't stop them.



What made the difference was teamwork, because the AEGEE members stepped in, supported each other, and made things work despite the challenges. This was a reminder that in AEGEE, it's not about how many people you have, but how much heart you put into it.

"Beyond the tradition, there is something rewarding about organizing an international event. It's a unique opportunity to host a group of friends from all over Europe and start the year by fostering the spirit of European unity."

And as the countdown approached midnight, a moment will forever stay with them. A group of participants and organisers walked to the city square to pay their respects and remember those lost in the tragedy in Novi Sad.

"It was a moment of deep connection, we stepped into the New Year motivated, united in hugs and song, honoring the past while looking toward the future."



So yes, celebrating New Year's Eve with AEGEE is not the same as celebrating it at home. It's not about making lists with resolutions, it's about starting the year already living it. And after eight years, one thing is clear: Winter Madness is here to stay. And for other locals thinking about organising something similar? "Be authentic, bold, and responsible. If you put your heart into it, the 'madness' will always be worth it."

**DID
YOU
KNOW?**



EUROPEAN NIGHT

European Night is a highlight of every AEGEE event, from Agorae to Summer Universities. Participants bring food and drinks from their countries, share traditions, and introduce others to their cultures. With music, dancing, and a mix of flavors from all over Europe, it's a night that truly brings the spirit of intercultural exchange to life.

AEGEE 40: SPARKS OF CIVIC CHANGE

HOW AEGEE CELEBRATED 40 YEARS ACROSS EUROPE

In 2025, AEGEE-Europe reached an incredible milestone: **40 years** of connecting young people across Europe. Under the motto “For the Sparks of Change”, this anniversary was more than just a celebration, it was a moment to reflect on the past, recognise the present, and inspire the future. The celebrations brought together AEGEEans from across the Network through international events, local activities, and one Gala evening in Groningen.

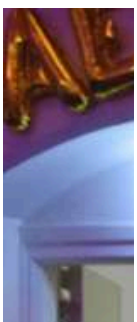
AEGEE DAY: CELEBRATING ACROSS BORDERS

Every year, around April 16 (the day our organisation was founded), the AEGEE Day Project brings the Network together for a Europe-wide celebration. In 2025, this moment was even more special, as it turned into a network-wide celebration of AEGEE's 40th anniversary. The project, organised by Karl, Saskia, Frederik, and Eliise, focused on two pillars this year: a celebration across Europe,

“Honestly, forty years sounds like a long time, almost twice my own age! We wanted to use this anniversary as a starting point to learn more about AEGEE's history and the people who shaped it. With this edition, we wanted to uncover more of them and create a space where others could do the same, to connect the past with the present and inspire the future.”

Frederik, member of the AEGEE
Day Project Team

with 15 local events in an activity booklet, and a Gala event, combined with a 5-day programme focused on civic engagement, empowering participants to become active contributors in their communities. From workshops and discussions to local gatherings, the network came alive with activities that reflected both AEGEE's diversity and its shared mission. Within the Network, AEGEE-Budapest stood out, whose civic engagement events reached over 130 participants.



2025 IN EVENTS

THE AEGEE40 GALA IN GRONINGEN

Hosted by AEGEE-Groningen and organised by Aleksandra, Ben, Cédric, Joris, Kirsten, Romy, and supported by Vincent, the 40th anniversary Gala was the highlight of the celebrations. Building on their experience from organising their own 35th anniversary, the team created an evening that truly captured the spirit of AEGEE. It was the same place where 30 years ago, AEGEE held its Gala.



“The sky's the limit! Get your wildest dreams on the table and figure out how you could possibly make it work. Also, always just contact other Locals to ask for help, information, or materials - AEGEE-Groningen is always happy to help!”

Kirsten, organiser of the
AEGEE40 Gala

The celebration began with a dinner on a boat, sailing through Groningen's canals, a perfectly Dutch start to the evening. From there, participants walked together to the Gala venue, where a live DJ, a dance floor, and spaces for both celebration and connection waited for them. During

the night, they had speeches, with some cakes with the anniversary logo on them, and an after-party in the city centre until the early hours. It was a reunion of generations, with participants coming from all across Europe, including members from multiple Antennae and AEGEE alumni. And beyond the music, the evening also carried a deeper meaning. A fundraiser in support of Ukraine was organised, featuring Ukrainian food, informational materials, and a raffle supported by local business owners. It was a powerful reminder that AEGEE's values remain at the heart of everything the Network does. Throughout the “AEGEE 40: Sparks of Civic Change” event, the Local Organisers also organised a Ukrainian dinner, a Ukrainian literature workshop, and kicked off the fundraiser beforehand.



Whether it was dancing at the Gala, organising local celebrations, or engaging in discussions about civic action, AEGEEans across Europe came together with a shared purpose. Because after 40 years, AEGEE is not just about where it has been, it's about where it's going next. And if this anniversary showed anything, it's that AEGEE continues to empower young people and bring them together across borders.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT AEGEE40 GALA



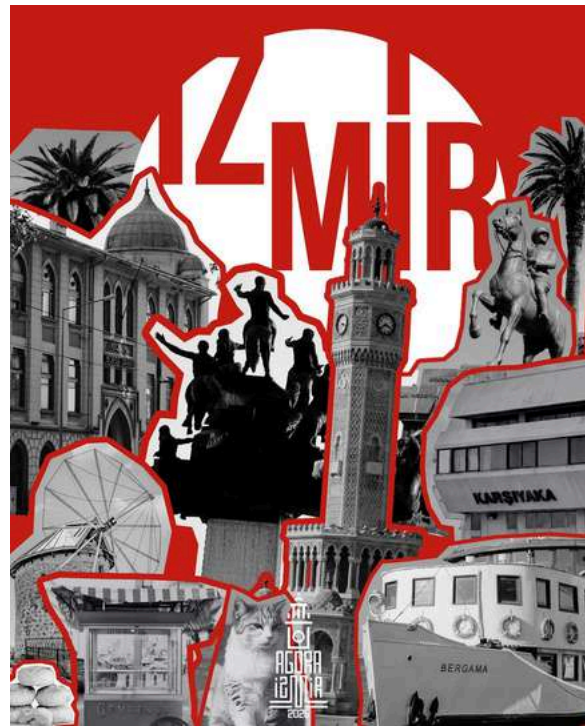
LOOKING FORWARD: SPRING AGORA İZMİR 2026

In 2026, after more than two decades, Agora is returning to one of its most iconic locations: İzmir. From 5 to 10 May 2026, Spring Agora will once again take place in the “Pearl of the Aegean”, bringing together AEGEEans from across Europe for discussions, decisions, and unforgettable moments.

For many in the Network, this is more than just another statutory event. Agora İzmir 2005 is still remembered as one of the most iconic editions, and bringing the Agora back feels like reconnecting with a meaningful part of AEGEE’s history.

A CITY THAT LIVES THE AEGEE SPIRIT

İzmir offers something unique for an event like Agora. A city shaped by centuries of cultural exchange, it carries an openness where different identities coexist and interact. Life here happens outdoors, by the sea, in parks, during long conversations over food, or while watching the sunset, and this is exactly what the organisers want participants to experience. As they describe it, İzmir doesn’t just host the Agora. It becomes part of it. Under the theme “Harmony & Synchronization”, Agora İzmir 2026



“Bringing the Agora back after more than 20 years feels like welcoming an old friend home.”

invites participants to reflect on how individuality and collectivity can exist together. Through interactive sessions and discussions, AEGEEans will explore how identities evolve in changing societies, how differences can coexist within shared spaces, and how diversity can become a source of strength rather than division. Agora İzmir is designed to go beyond the traditional structure, as the organisers envision the city itself as a “living campus”, where learning

and connection happen everywhere, and workshops exist alongside sessions, not as an afterthought.

“The event will be shaped around the city’s biggest park and the seaside, places that can naturally slow you down. And when the days feel intense, the sunsets by the sea will be there to remind everyone to breathe.”



DENİZ ECE ERPINAR
MAIN COORDINATOR



MELTEM KARACA
FUNDRAISING & LOGISTICS
COORDINATOR



YASEMİN DEFNE ŞİRİN
INCOMING COORDINATOR



DURU ARIN ÇAKIR
SOCIAL PROGRAMME
COORDINATOR



BURAK ZİYA
BUDGET COORDINATOR



DR. ÇAĞRI BAYIR
PUBLIC RELATIONS & CONTENT
COORDINATOR

Behind the event is a dedicated core team from AEGEE-İzmir, combining experience, creativity, and strong teamwork. Supported by the Local’s previous experience in organising

international events, they bring both confidence and a fresh vision to this edition. What drives them most is the shared motivation to create something meaningful, not just well-organised, but memorable.

“Sharing responsibility, trusting each other, and laughing even when things get stressful has already strengthened us as a team. We are learning to move in synchronization, and that feels very good. As they always say, ‘Teamwork, Dreamwork!’”

For those who have never attended an Agora before, İzmir 2026 promises to be the perfect starting point, because it is already designed as a welcoming and engaging event where you can experience what “Europe without borders” feels like in practice.

So see you in İzmir in May!



AEGEE COOPERATES



Board of the European Students of Technology (BEST) is a student NGO which provides communication, cooperation and exchange possibilities for students all over Europe. BEST and AEGEE share knowledge and best practices, work together on training opportunities and participate in each other's events.



Junior Enterprises Europe (JE Europe) is a non-political, non-governmental, and non-profit network that connects student-run Junior Enterprises across Europe. It supports students by offering practical entrepreneurial experience, fostering collaboration and skill development, and helping them bridge the gap between academic studies and real-world careers.



Generation Climate Europe (GCE) is the largest youth-led climate network in Europe, representing over 200 active volunteers and more than 380 organisations across 46 countries. GCE works to build power in the climate movement by convening grassroots organisations, fostering transnational collaboration, and supporting frontline action with capacity-building, funding, and institutional access.



ESTIEM is a non-political, non-governmental, and non-profit organisation that connects European students of Industrial Engineering and Management, by offering a strong international network and non-formal education opportunities, and helping them grow into future leaders beyond their formal studies.



European Law Students' Association (ELSA) is an independent, non-political, non-governmental, and non-profit network for law students and young lawyers across Europe. It supports their academic and professional development through international opportunities, non-formal legal education, and a strong European network.



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is an intergovernmental, non-profit organisation that connects people from Asia and Europe to promote dialogue and cooperation. It creates opportunities for exchange, builds lasting networks, and brings civil society perspectives into the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), supporting joint solutions to shared global challenges.



Electrical Engineering Students' European Association (EESTEC) is a non-political, non-governmental, and non-profit network for students in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, and related fields across Europe. It supports their personal and professional development through international collaboration, cultural exchange, and non-formal education opportunities.

AEGEE IN PLATFORMS



The European Youth Forum is the biggest platform of youth organisations in Europe, representing over 100 youth organisations, which bring together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe. The European Youth Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives and advocates for their rights. The Youth Forum promotes youth participation, making young people catalysts for positive change and contributors of innovative solutions to Europe's challenges.



The European Civic Forum (ECF) is an independent network of nearly 100 civil society organisations across 30 European countries. Since 2005, it has worked to protect civic space, promote citizen participation, and strengthen dialogue, aiming to build more equal, democratic, and inclusive societies based on values like freedom and solidarity.



European Movement International (EMI) brings together a wide range of European actors, from civil society and NGOs to trade unions, academia, and political organisations, to promote peace, democracy, and European integration. As the largest pan-European network of its kind, it encourages citizen participation, fosters debate on Europe's future, and develops ideas and solutions based on shared values like human rights, equality, and the rule of law.



The Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL) is the largest European network in education and training, bringing together over 40 organisations that represent more than 60,000 institutions across formal, non-formal, and informal learning. Its members include schools, universities, youth organisations, educators, and volunteers, reaching millions of learners across Europe.

OUR PARTNERS



The Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) represents youth NGOs within the Council of Europe's co-management system. It advises on youth policies, priorities, and programmes, ensuring young people's voices are included in decision-making. By promoting participation, democracy, and inclusion, it helps integrate youth perspectives across the Council of Europe's work and encourages young people to shape society.



The European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) is an international, Brussels-based non-profit organisation with a pan-European membership and more than 30 years of experience. Our mission is to empower citizens in order to create a more inclusive and stronger European Union by promoting and defending citizens' rights and developing and supporting mechanisms to increase citizens and citizen organisations' democratic participation in, and engagement with, the EU.

The Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG) is a global network representing youth organisations and individuals working on environmental issues. As the official youth engagement mechanism of UNEP, it advocates for young people's participation in tackling climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, through policy advocacy, knowledge sharing, capacity building, and youth engagement.

Conference of INGOs: As the representative body of the INGOs enjoying participatory status with the Council of Europe, the Conference facilitates the participation of organised civil society in the work of the Council of Europe. It serves as a platform where civil society can interact with the Council of Europe in the attainment of its goals. It also promotes participatory democracy, active citizenship and freedom of association.



The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) brings together civil society organisations from Eastern Partnership countries and the EU to strengthen cooperation, dialogue, and democratic development. It supports networking, promotes human rights and good governance, and ensures that civil society voices contribute to regional and EU-level policymaking.



PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS



The European Youth Foundation (EYF) is a fund that provides grants to youth organisations to promote and enhance Council of Europe values, standards and priorities with young people. EYF's mission is to promote peace, understanding and international co-operation between young people in Europe and beyond, in a spirit of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Council of Europe (CoE) has its headquarters in Strasbourg, France. With 46 member states and a combined population of over 700 million people, the Council of Europe was set up in 1949 to ensure that the atrocities of WW II never happen again. Its work is unique in that everything it does is based on its core values: human rights, democracy and rule of law. The Council of Europe is a separate organisation from the 27-member European Union.



Erasmus+ is a European Commission-funded programme that invests in education, training, youth, and sport across Europe and partner countries. It provides financial support for learning mobility, exchanges, and cooperation projects, enabling people to study, train, and gain experience abroad. The programme strengthens cross-border collaboration between institutions and organisations, fostering skills development, inclusion, and innovation. Erasmus+ contributes to the EU's long-term strategies on education, youth empowerment, and social cohesion. Through these efforts, it supports a more connected, skilled, and resilient Europe.

HONORARY MEMBERS

***Honorary Members** are individuals who have performed outstanding service to or support for AEGEE-Europe and therefore have been awarded the highest recognition in our association. Nominations are submitted by locals or bodies of AEGEE-Europe and are subject to ratification at the Agora.*



Franck Biancheri (1989, AEGEE-Paris)

Founder, President of AEGEE-Europe, Founder of AEGEE, President of AEGEE-Europe 1985–1988. Only Honorary President. Recognised for the creation of the organisation, for his contribution in launching or supporting important initiatives that influenced European policy makers and European students, such as the introduction of the Erasmus Programme.



Georgina von der Gablentz (1993, AEGEE-Berlin)

President of AEGEE-Europe 1990–1992, President of the East-West Working Group, President of AEGEE-Berlin. Recognised for her contribution in increasing the participation of AEGEE antennae in the decision-making process of AEGEE, as well as for her initiatives to open up AEGEE to students from Central and Eastern European countries.



Vittorio Dell'Aquila (1993, AEGEE-Milano)

Coordinator of the AEGEE Summer University Project, the largest and longest-running mobility project of AEGEE-Europe, from 1990–1995. Vice-President of AEGEE-Europe 1990–1991. Recognised for his dedication to promote, develop and disseminate the Summer University Project and for his dedication to promote the use and learning of different languages.



Jeroen Hoogerwerf (1993, AEGEE-Amsterdam)

Chairperson of the Agora 1990–1991, President of AEGEE-Europe 1992–1993, President of AEGEE-Amsterdam, first Chief Editor of the News in 1988–1989, organiser of the Agora Amsterdam 1991.



Michael Merker (1993, AEGEE-Leipzig)

Member of the Comité Directeur 1990–1992, Vice-President of AEGEE-Europe 1991–1992, Chairperson of the Agora 1994–1995, founder of AEGEE-Leipzig, first AEGEE antenna behind the Iron Curtain in 1990. Recognised for his involvement in AEGEE's expansion to the East and the foundation of new locals beyond the Iron Curtain.



Zsuzsa Kigyós (1995, AEGEE-Budapest)

Founding member of AEGEE-Budapest in 1990, Organiser of the Agora in Budapest in 1991, the first Agora in Central and Eastern Europe, President of AEGEE-Europe 1993–1994. Recognised for her involvement in establishing AEGEE in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as being AEGEE-Europe's first female president.



Philipp von Klitzing (1996, AEGEE-Aachen)

Member of the Comité Directeur in 1993/1994. Editor-in-Chief of the OneEurope Magazine 1994–1998, and support for AEGEE's technical infrastructure for 30 years. Recognised for his contribution of introducing the concept of long-term strategic planning and annual projects that have helped AEGEE to streamline and focus its activities, and also for his dedication to the IT infrastructure.



Stefan Recksiegel (1999, AEGEE-Karlsruhe)

One of the leading people of AEGEE's IT Working Group in the early years of the internet. Administrator of the first AEGEE server, President of AEGEE-Karlsruhe. Recognised for innovations which he brought forward in the field of IT in AEGEE, and as well for his contribution in establishing AEGEE on Cyprus.



Markus Schönherr (2001, AEGEE-Passau)

Founder and Speaker of the working group Visa Freedom Fighters, Financial Director and Network Director of AEGEE-Europe 1997–1998, first generation Network Commission member in 1997, Organiser of Case Study Trip Moldova in 1997. Recognised for his commitment to the network development in Central and Eastern Europe and his activities to abolish visa restrictions in Europe.

HONORARY MEMBERS



Michiel van Hees (2002, AEGEE-Eindhoven)

Member of the Coordination Team of the AEGEE-Europe Yearplan Projects “Find Your Way” in 1996 and “Euro and Euro” in 1997, creator of AEGEE.tv in 2002, creator and organiser of several Media Schools, Liaison Officer towards the European Cultural Foundation in 1996, President of AEGEE-Eindhoven, Main Organiser of the Presidents Meeting in Eindhoven in 1996, founder and President of AEGEE-Arnheim in 1998. Recognised for his contribution to AEGEE-Europe projects and for introducing AEGEE.tv and Media Schools.



Olivier Genkin (2005, AEGEE-Mainz/Wiesbaden)

Project Manager of the Yearplan Project “EU & Europe” in 2003–2004, Speaker of the International Politics Working Group 2000–2004, member of the Address Book Coordination Team, AEGEE20 Project Team Member 2004–2005. Recognised for his overall contribution to the organisation, development and planning of new AEGEE-Europe projects, establishment of new antennae, and support to project teams.



Gunnar Erth (2006, AEGEE-Szeged)

Editor-in-Chief of five Keys to Europe, among them the 20th Anniversary Book, Organiser of five European Schools, two Public Relations European Schools and several other European trainings, Member of the Comité Directeur 1996, Network Commissioner 1997–1998, Members Commissioner 1999–2000, President of Human Rights Working Group 1995–1996, board member of the PRWG, Founding member of the AEGEE Academy, Member of the Coordination Team of the Yearplan Project “Find your Way”. Recognised for his contribution to AEGEE-Europe’s publications and human resources trainings.



Silvia Baita (2009, AEGEE-Cagliari)

President of AEGEE-Europe 2004–2005, Network Director of AEGEE-Europe in 2004, Vice-Chairperson of the Agora 2006, PRWG board member 2002–2003. Recognised for being a prime example of female leadership for many years, being a rare person in the history of AEGEE who took both the roles of President of AEGEE and Chairperson of the Agora.



Kamala Schütze (2009, AEGEE-Gießen, AEGEE-Termoli)

Secretary-General of AEGEE-Europe 2004–2005, Project Manager and member of the Summer University Coordination Team 2000–2007, Address Book Coordination Team member 2003–2007. Recognised for her years of devotion to the Summer University Project, and for bringing innovation and quality to AEGEE's biggest and most important project to this day.



Burcu Becermen (2012, AEGEE-Ankara)

President of AEGEE-Europe in 2005, European Institutions Director of AEGEE-Europe 2004–2005, Project Manager of the "Turkish-Greek Civic Dialogue Project" 2002–2005, Young European of the Year in 2006, awarded by the Schwarzkopf Foundation. Recognised for her contribution to peace-building, people-to-people contacts and cooperation of young people and organisations in the region by managing the large-scale Dialogue Project.



David Stulík (2013, AEGEE-Praha)

Vice-President of AEGEE-Warszawa 1991–1993, speaker of the East-West Working Group 1993–1994, Projects Director and Vice-President of AEGEE-Europe 1995–1996, Coordination Team member of the Find your Way project of AEGEE-Europe 1996, Coordinator of the Case Study Trip to Ukraine 1995 – establishment of AEGEE antennae in Ukraine, first ever Young European of the Year, awarded by Schwarzkopf Foundation in 1997.



Christoph Leclercq (2014, AEGEE-Köln)

He was part of the first group of AEGEEans who shaped this organisation in Paris and Cologne. After his active time in AEGEE he founded Euractiv, one of the leading online media platforms for European issues. He has provided valuable support to our European Boards in Brussels year after year, with his personal advice and through a special partnership with Euractiv.



Bernhard Müller (2017, AEGEE-Augsburg)

Honorary member of his local AEGEE-Augsburg. Funder of the Network Commission 1996. Founder of the AEGEE Academy 1999. CD member from Spring Agora Barcelona 1999, responsible for Human Resources. Manager and trainer at several European Schools.

EUROPEANLY YOURS, COMITÉ DIRECTEUR 62

Dear Network,

As our term came to an end, we would like to say goodbye and thank you for everything we have experienced over the past year. Words cannot fully express what we have gone through together during our term. One thing is certain though - we couldn't be happier or feel more fulfilled than we do right now. Thank you for your support, for every new idea and for every word we have exchanged!

We hope we are leaving our Network in good shape, ready for steady growth and to become better and better with each passing year. And to all those who are not yet part of AEGEE, do yourselves a favour and join. It's a life-changing experience. You won't regret it.

To the new team, Comité Directeur 63, we wish you a successful mandate full of satisfaction, happiness and beautiful memories with the Network. AEGEE is being left in very good hands and we can't wait to see what you will achieve! We will for sure be watching and supporting your work!

And last but for sure not least, to every AEGEEan that we were lucky enough to work with or even just to talk to during our mandate, thank you for everything and see you somewhere in Europe hopefully very very soon!



WELCOME, COMITÉ DIRECTEUR 63

2025 brought a new Comité Directeur (CD), that brings together different journeys, shared values, and a strong motivation to give back to the organisation that has shaped them.

After years of involvement at local and European levels, joining the CD felt like a natural next step. Whether it started with a Summer University, a Local Training Course, or spontaneous encouragement at an event, each of them found in AEGEE a platform to challenge themselves, build new friendships, and develop both personally and professionally.

What unites them is the desire to contribute further. For some, it's about pushing their own limits and testing their leadership skills. For others, it's about creating opportunities for the next generation of AEGEEans, and making the organisation an even more

welcoming and inspiring space.

Looking ahead, the new CD shares a common vision: an AEGEE that is bold, creative, and accessible. They want members to feel confident to bring new ideas, and challenge the status quo. From encouraging innovation and strengthening engagement at both local and European levels, to making areas like finance more approachable, their goals reflect both ambition and care for the network.

At the heart of it all is the idea that AEGEE is a space where young people can explore, create, and grow together. They want to create exactly that environment, while also expanding the Network and fostering stronger connections across Europe. They are ready to continue building an AEGEE that empowers, connects, and inspires.

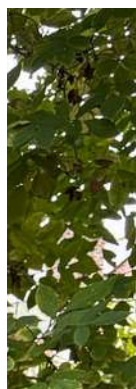


MEET OUR SECRETARIAT

While much of AEGEE's spirit and energy comes from its volunteers across Europe, the Secretariat plays a key role in supporting the Network behind the scenes, ensuring continuity, structure, and connection at the European level. The current Secretariat team is based in Brussels: Diana Badea (Projects Officer & Alumni Relations Responsible), Alice Gastaldi (Projects and Fundraising Trainee), and Mónica Romão (Communications Trainee).

Together, they support AEGEE-Europe's daily operations, project implementation, communication, and fundraising efforts, helping the organisation's initiatives come to life across the network. For them, working with AEGEE is about being part of a space where European values are not only discussed but lived in practice.

Many of them were drawn to AEGEE because it represents something different from traditional institutional environments, a place where connections, ideas, and communities actively shape the future of Europe. They have always appreciated the trust and responsibility given from the very beginning, as it helps them see themselves as active contributors to European youth work. Beyond skills and professional development, the Secretariat also experiences first-hand the dedication of AEGEEans. From Locals to European Bodies, the organisation thrives because of people who invest their time and passion into building something bigger than themselves. Their message to the Network: your work is seen, and it matters. AEGEE is sustained by the people who believe in it and continue to build it every day.



THANK YOU FOR READING!

KEY2EUROPE 2025 TEAM

Florina-Marieta Neagu

Editor-in-Chief, Article Writer &
Graphic Designer

Eliise Haljas

Proofreader & Concept creator

Eren Geçkin

Proofreader & Concept creator

Petra Gombár

CD appointed member

SPECIAL MENTIONS

Thank you to all the Locals, European Bodies, Comité Directeur and Secretariat members, members of the Communications Committee and AEGEEans who contributed to our interviews, supported us, and shared their stories. There are never enough pages to mention all of you.

A special thank you goes to Gunnar Erth for his collection of pictures and invaluable insights into AEGEE's history, Sándor Zsók for the pictures at EPM Tartu, and to Teddy van Amelsvoort for helping us navigate information about AEGEE today.

DISCLAIMERS

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**CELEBRATING
40 YEARS OF THE
EUROPEAN
STUDENTS' FORUM**