

KEY TO EUROPE

2006/2007



AECEE's YEARBOOK



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Angela Merkel

THE FEDERAL CHANCELLOR OF
THE REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

This year Europe celebrates a very special anniversary. The signing of the Treaties of Rome on 25 March 1957 represents a milestone in European integration. Germany has particular reason to be thankful for this process. I am thus all the more pleased that the anniversary falls during our Presidency of the EU Council.

A look back at the last 50 years reveals Europe to be an unprecedented success story. Our continent stands for the preservation of human dignity, for peace and freedom, for tolerance and solidarity, as well as for democracy and the rule of law. Above all Europe will play a vital role in our future.

No state alone can master challenges such as tackling climate change, combating international terrorism or shaping globalization. Europe allows us to develop solutions to these challenges and to use our combined influence to persuade others of their importance. Take the issue of climate change, for example. Here, we are pursuing ambitious goals within the Community itself, while offering other states incentives to take action. With the European Council decision of March 2007 to increase the share of renewable energy to 20% of total consumption and boost energy efficiency by the same amount by 2020, we showed that Europe is well aware of its responsibilities.

If Europe is to find pioneering answers to the most important questions of the future, it must be in a position to act and make decisions. This is why we need a Constitutional Treaty containing the necessary institutional reforms. What is more, the Constitutional Treaty makes clear for the first time what cooperation in the European Union is based on: the common values and objectives which form the bedrock of the Community. In order to bring forward the constitutional process, I have taken it upon myself as President of the European Council to present a Road Map. This provides for decisions to be reached on this issue by the European elections in 2009.

We also celebrate a second anniversary in Europe this year: the 20th year of the highly popular

Erasmus exchange programme. Since its creation in 1987 – a move strongly supported by the AEGEE itself – the programme has become one of the European Union's incontrovertible successes. Erasmus allows young people to travel freely, to gather valuable experiences and to make friends across borders. In this way, it provides excellent opportunities to become better acquainted with Europe and experience the continent in all its richness.

I truly believe that the sort of exchange and dialogue to which AEGEE makes such a positive contribution is vital to us here in the European Union. This is how the Community will continue to grow closer together. To my mind, the Forum embodies the European values of freedom, diversity and tolerance practised on a daily basis.

May you continue to support Europe and promote the idea of European integration so actively and with such enthusiasm.



Theijs van Welij

THE PRESIDENT OF
AEGEE EUROPE

Dear Reader,

I'm proud to present you with AEGEE's yearbook, the Key to Europe. We look back over the dynamic last year, in which several long term projects were finished and unique projects have been started. Furthermore, as an interdisciplinary student organisation we took the initiative to include a wide variety of other student NGOs in our projects.

Twenty two years ago AEGEE was founded with the aim of constructing a borderless Europe, assuming a collective responsibility for the future of Europe. With the launch of "Take Control! Ways to Democracy in Europe", AEGEE initiated an innovative project at the confluence of the European idea and democracy. Within 6 different themes, we held international congresses, election observation missions and workshops during cultural exchanges. These are only a few examples of the numerous events coordinated by transnational teams of young people.

In this yearbook, results of all activities organised within the year plan topic "Democracy in Europe" will be presented to you. AEGEE's role is to change society, and people involved in the Caucasus Case Study trip have experienced the impact of their visit to Georgia and Azerbaijan. The follow-up of the project is impressive – as you can read in the articles in this publication.

The Training for Democracy, focussing on students from secondary schools, as well as the Training for youth NGOs in Odesa are examples how AEGEE fosters active citizenship. With the simulation "Model European Union" in the European Parliament of Strasbourg, we once again proved that we dare to take risks, to achieve our objectives. As the European Students' voice, AEGEE speaks out on the Bologna Process, which is unfortunately affecting the amount of time students can spend on voluntary work.

Therefore we launched the new Flagship project "Education Unlimited! Improving European Education", to fight together with other stakeholders for recognition of Non Formal Education. It's our way to guarantee the future of our organisation and to gain human resources for our Working Groups, of which several will celebrate their 10th anniversary this year.

The Summer University Project is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2007. In the past decades, over fifty thousand young people had the chance to participate in this intercultural project. This fourth lustrum will be marked with a Multilanguage Summer University in München. In AEGEE, real people do all the work, and I would like to thank them for all their efforts in organising great events, publications and other kinds of activities.

Last but not least, I would like to thank and congratulate the "Key to Europe" team with this annual review. It is not words but acts that determine credibility, and I'm proud to conclude that we are a powerful and effective organisation, that knows how to make a difference without the need for a national level.

I hope that reading this "Key to Europe" will inspire you, as it did me back in 2003. And remember, YOU can make a change!

THE IDEA OF AEGEE



1986, EGEE II - Munchen

Higher Education



Active Citizenship



Cultural Exchange

Peace and Stability

AEGEE (Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe) is one of Europe's largest interdisciplinary student associations, promoting a unified Europe, cross-border co-operation, communication, integration among students, an open and tolerant society of tomorrow. Founded in Paris in 1985, AEGEE enjoys 21 years of its activity on the European NGO scene.

AEGEE is a non-governmental, non-profit organization, operating without being linked to any political party. A widely spread student Network of **15,000 members** in more than **240 local branches**, so-called antennae, provides the ideal platform where young people from over **41 European countries** can work together, free from any national way of thinking.

AEGEE brings together European students of all study disciplines with activities such as international conferences, seminars, exchanges, training courses and case study trips where they analyze a broad variety of topics from a European point of view, and discuss them with different experts. The focus of the association lies within four main Fields of Action: Active Citizenship, Cultural Exchange, Higher Education and Peace and Stability.

AEGEE operates without any national level of organization, and relies solely on the local branches and a European level that consists of Working Groups, Commissions, Project Teams and the Comité Directeur, the European Board of Directors.

Every year **AEGEE** devotes itself to carrying out a project on a European-wide scale, the Yearplan project. Last year the topic of it was Tolerance – Acceptance – Peace with the focus on the conflict areas in Europe. In 2006 the flagship project Take Control - Ways to Democracy in Europe is about fostering the active citizenship in a wide sense. Next year in **AEGEE's** Bologna Process will come to the main field of interest.

AEGEE has been co-operating on a regular basis with the European Commission for implementing projects and has been consulted on topics related to education, in particularly the SOCRATES program. **AEGEE** enjoys the Participatory Status in Council of Europe, Operational Sta-

tus at UNESCO and is a member of the European Youth Forum and European Movement.

Among the organisations' patrons are:

Árpád Goncz - Former President of Republic of Hungary
Bronislaw Geremek - Laureate of the Karlspreis of the city of Aachen, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Former Chair of the OSCE

Catherine Lalumière - Former Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Member of the European Parliament

Daniel Tarschys - Former Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Emma Bonino - Former Member of European Parliament, Board of International Crisis Group (ICG)

Eric Froment - Former President of the European University Association

Mikhael Gorbachev - Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Former Secretary General of the USSR

György Konrád - Author, Laureate of the Karlspreis of the city of Aachen, President of the "Akademie der Künste", Vice President of PEN International

Dr. Josep María Bricall - Former President of the Conference of European Rectors

Kenneth J. Edwards - Former President of the Conference of European Rectors

Romano Prodi - Prime Minister of Italy, Former President of the European Commission

Rita Süßmuth - Former President of German Parliament, Bundestag; Member of German Parliament

Radmila Šekerinska - Deputy President of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, in charge of Secretariat for European Integration

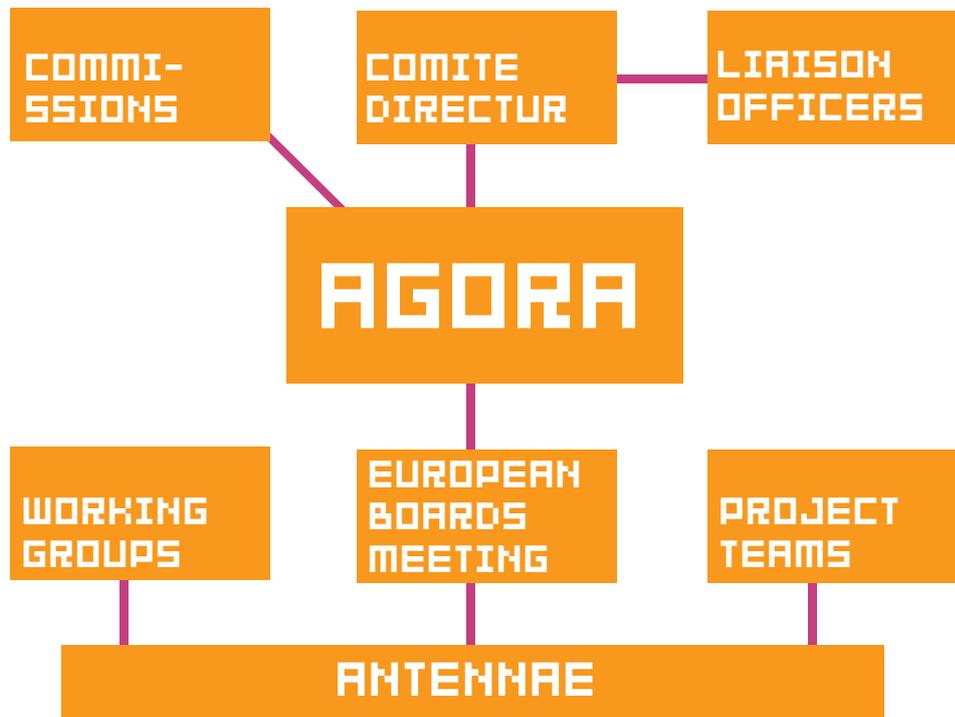
Václav Havel - Former President of the Czech Republic

Wolfgang Thierse - President of the German Parliament

Jacques Santer - Former Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Former President of the European Commission, Member of European Parliament

Dr. E. Fenech Adami - President and former Prime Minister of The Republic of Malta

Further information on www.aegEE.org



One of the factors distinguishing AEGEE from other student associations is its unique structure. We **do not have a national level**, thus linking the European level directly to the locals: our individual antennae in European student cities. This structure gives AEGEE a truly European dimension, reflecting our ideal of a Europe without borders. There are many ways for AEGEE members to become active, such as joining one of the Europe-wide working groups and project teams, representing their locals at Agoras, or even candidating to lead AEGEE on the European level in the Comité Directeur or one of the Commissions.

Agora: AEGEE's General Assembly – the Agora – meets twice a year, usually in May and November. Up to 1000 AEGEE members gather for four days in one city to discuss and vote on proposals, projects, strategies and policies, and to elect new CD members and Commissioners along with any other vacant positions.

Antenna: Local AEGEE groups are called “antennae”, “contact antennae” or “contacts” when they are not yet fully registered. They usually organise at least one European event per year, as well as a number of local activities. The AEGEE network currently has 240 antennae and contact groups across 41 European countries.

Comité Directeur: The Comité Directeur (CD), often referred to as “AEGEE-Europe”, is the governing board of our association. It consists of up to nine elected AEGEE members from at least four countries. Every CD member has a particular area of responsibility, but as a team, the CD is the main coordinating and representative body of AEGEE. Among its responsibilities are contacts with the EU institutions, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, as well as other student associations and the media.

Commissions: The Commissions are elected to support and monitor the work of the CD. There are four in total: the Audit Commission, the Members Commission, the Juridical Commission and the Network Commission.

European Boards' Meeting (EBM): At the EBM, several hundred active members meet to discuss and learn about the future both of AEGEE and of Europe in general, through projects, workshops and other activities. Until November 2000 the EBM was known as the Presidents' Meeting and it was intended as a statutory meeting to prepare for the next Agora. Between 2001 and 2004 the Presidents' Meeting was replaced by the Planning Meeting, which served as much more of a think tank. The EBM is an ongoing attempt to combine both concepts.

Liaison Office: Liaison officers and agents are appointed by the CD as points of contact between AEGEE and other organisations, institutions and companies both on the European and national levels.

Project Teams: International project teams manage AEGEE's Europe-wide projects. The teams, consisting of volunteers from different participating locals, manage the conferences and other activities organised as part of each project.

Working Groups: Our Working Groups represent a foundation of knowledge – as well as continuous efforts to learn more – on various topics of importance to AEGEE. They bring together international groups of AEGEE members who are interested and often skilled in a specific field. Some focus on a noteworthy theme such as human rights, while others offer support to the network in a particular discipline such as information technology.



1985: Creation of AEGEE by "Bureaux des élèves" from 5 grandes écoles in Paris, led by Frank Biancheri. EGEE 1 conference as focus of student support for European integration. 1986: Night of Seven Antennas (video Conference). First Agora in Munchen. 1987: First Euromanagers conference. Congress Europe-Africa. Lobbying to implement Erasmus program with support of François Mitterand. 1988: First Summer Universities. Name of the association changed to AEGEE. 1989: Creation of the external publication Scope. Conference "Women in Europe". 1990: Enlargement to the East. 1991: First European Schools. First Agora in the East (Budapest). 1992: First antenna in Turkey. First Key to Europe published. 1993: Management competition Champ. 1994: : First use of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) in AEGEE. 1995: 10th anniversary. At second Agora-Budapest, decision taken to move the Comité Directeur from Delft to Brussels.

1996: Round table discussion on single currency. Find Your Way event cycle. Creation of Network Commission. CD reduced to nine members. Case study trip to Ex-Yugoslavia. 1997: "Europe and Euro" Socrates Action Days. 1998: "Building a Social Europe". Achieving consultative status at UNESCO and the UN's ECOSOC council. Membership in the European Youth Forum. 1999: Peace Summit: final conference: "Peace Academy". Creation of AEGEE-Academy 2000: Borderless Europe Rally. Education for Democracy. 2001: Socrates Promoters on the Move. "Quo Vadis Europe". 2002: Eureca: European Education Campaign. Creation of AEGEE-TV 2003: Caucasus Case Study Trip. World Youth Summit on Globalisation. Turkish-Greek Civil Dialogue. 2004: First Election Observation Mission - Ukraine. Performing Arts Summer School 2005: 20th anniversary - The Happening in Praha.

TAKE CONTROL! - FOCUS OF 2006



February 2007, Strasbourg - Model European Union



YOU ARE WELCOME TO TAKE CONTROL!

by Ankie Knippenbergh

Ten people hidden in colourful scarfs, gloves and boots crunch through the snow somewhere in Estonia. They are taking a break from a hard-working day. Why are these people from Germany, Holland, Italy, Romania, Poland and England spending their Christmas holidays in Otepää?

They are at the meeting of the project team of "Take Control, Ways to democracy in Europe". From Estonia they will help spread democracy over Europe. There are three challenges for democracy: the decreasing democratic participation in Western Europe, the European Union, which is not functioning as it should be, and the lack of democracy in the east of Europe. These come together in AEGEE's flagship project for 2006.

The project's main aim is to increase the involvement and engagement of young people in the (European) political process, 'because democracy does not start or end with the ballot box', as Rob from AEGEE-Münster said.

So who are the people in this team? Why do they spend their Christmas holidays in Estonia working on this project?

Maarika (AEGEE-Tartu) is the project co-ordinator and leading the international team: "we do it because we can".

Laura (Bucharest, Romania) gives, on one hand, two reasons "I am Romanian, my country was without a democratic system until very recently. I don't remember, but I know the stories from my parents and my grandparents". On the other hand, she really likes the fact that the volunteer work gives her the opportunity to do what she wants, the way she wants it and it gives her the chance to develop herself.

Ines (AEGEE-Osnabrück) is working on one of the sub projects. She will organise with her team a Model European Union to educate, by the means of the simulation, young people in Europe about the decision-making process. The project is designed so that basically everyone can participate, either they are interested in European decision-making, journalism, lobbying, visa issues or all of these.

"I take the energy from the group. They are all students like me, we are not an elitist group. They all have this drive, that, no matter how, we can make a change. Everybody can make this difference, every single European could be positively involved" captures Selene (AEGEE-Milano), "we are not doing this for the group's benefit, but for the European society."

She is closely co-operating with Stefan (AEGEE-Dresden) in the Election Observation Missions in developing democracies: 'When I was in the Ukraine during the revolution, I just

saw the importance of being there. Observing, walking around, making sure the elections would be fair. I felt I could make a difference'.

At the Agora in Valletta "Take Control, Ways to democracy in Europe" will end. The project has run for two full years in total, starting by the election of the topic at the spring Agora Enschede. From that point, on loads of people, ideas and events contributed to the creation of a better democracy in Europe. Now, at the end of the two years, the time has come to look back and see what we achieved. Did we manage to fulfil our aims? Did we actually have an impact on the European society?

We chose a topic as broad as "Democracy in Europe", because there were many angles to work on and also many people willing to work for this topic. We developed a big project with several sub-parts. From each part you will find a results presentation in the next pages. All these projects together contributed to the general aim of the project, which was to make the European youth more active in their democratic countries and provide them with knowledge and tools to become active citizens; because we strongly believe that democracy in Europe will succeed, only if everybody is able and willing to participate.

It is always hard to decide how to publish and measure the result of this kind of projects. We have chosen to try in each article to reflect on the aim of the project, so that the articles in this publication could serve as a proof or, in some cases, as an example of how each one of these projects is contributing in achieving the general aims of our project. In terms of conclusion, there is a final article getting back to the questions raised above: did we manage to fulfil our aims? Did we actually have an impact on the European society?

Ankie Knippenbergh - her local is AEGEE - Tilburg, where she became a member 3 years ago, shortly before joining the local board. Now she is 24 years old and a graduate in Leisure Science. After European School 2 Ankara, she is working as the Content Manager of Take Control.





EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ... AND HAVE A SAY IN EUROPE!

by Yvonne van Rossenberg

1.000.000! The magic number! We only need one million signatures to make it count...

After the 'NO' vote of the French and the Dutch, 'NO' against the European Constitution, the atmosphere was unpleasant for the active European citizens like us. A time of reconsideration, the white book, plan D... dark times they were...

**but not for us,
we can't get enough,
for us it was time to Take Control!**

It was since the Agora in Izmir that I had been interested in this amazing but unpronounceable idea: the European Citizens' Initiative [The European zîzîzî]. In Izmir, "Take Control", the Flagship project of 2006, started and the ECI was part of that.

In Izmir, the ECI was just an idea, an endeavour, an aim. An idea that welled up in a workshop while talking about the European constitution. The idea that came up was that we should collect one million signatures, just to prove that citizens of Europe are interested in European affairs. This would put pressure on the European institutions to come up with the regulations for this European citizens' initiative. And in the end we would have this 'tool' for more (direct) democracy in Europe. So, not start thinking but start acting.

In the European Constitution there was a first version of a kind of European Citizens' Initiative (article 47.4), added to the constitution at the last moment to 'upgrade' it. Later, I heard it was a version that was not well thought-out and poorly discussed about. It would be redefined later on, once the constitution was ratified... But we all know, it still is not ratified and therefore still a proposal.

November 15th 2005, a meeting of the European Economic Social Committee in Brussels. The topic of this meeting: Europe and its citizens, how to bridge the gap?

To have something to start with this project, we had to come in touch with the European institutions. The ECI could be the answer to the question, placed in the title of this meeting. If the European Citizens could directly put their concerns and ideas into the European political agenda, this would build

the needed bridge. On this meeting we met some people of Democracy International, an organisation for the promotion of global democracy. We organised a workshop on the topic and there the lobbying for this project started.

Somewhere in that same November, we even were invited to a breakfast with commissioner Mrs Wallström to talk about communication with European citizens. Mrs Margot Wallström is a member of the European Commission, Commission's Vice President dealing with Inter-institutional Relations and Communication. As you can imagine, the Commission is not entirely in favour of the ECI but this Commissioner was at least interested in the idea of it.

The discussing, thinking and lobbying that was excluded from the initial idea actually became our main task. So, first was to figure out how the actual text of the proposal would look, what kind of initiative did we want? Which advantages and disadvantages had to be taken into consideration? And then of course, for such a big goal we needed more support than just Democracy International. In order to organise yourself in the most effective way, in Brussels you need NGOs that support your idea and will help you in your project. Although a lot of organisations were very supportive, it was sometimes frustrating, asking and asking why people are so enthusiastic but why nothing happened. Was that my Dutch nature? Or is it just the "way things go in Brussels"? The bureaucratic aspect of it all?

From there we went further with the whole process. A group of people was formed in Brussels to work on the lobbying full-time. The result is very promising, as 113 NGOs are supporting the ECI at the moment. They are different organisations from all parts of Europe and very different parts of society like the Young European Federalists and the International Federation of Liberal Youth. On the 9th of November 2006, almost one year later, the official campaign started in Brussels. You can even sign the initiative online!



For AEGEE, for us active European citizens, it was sometimes hard to follow what was going on in Brussels. We, the “AEGEE-team”, tried to hold on to the project by talking to as many people about the ECI as we could because we felt that, if people were to sign the petition, it would be because they would have understood why we need the European Citizens’ Initiative. Then only the people who had signed could convince others to sign and create in this way a European-wide support network for the campaign. In order to achieve this, we provided workshops at the EBM in Sofia, the Spring Agora in Warszawa and at the Summer Universities in Nijmegen and Enschede.

But what happened after the official launch of the campaign? An awkward silence, the number of the signatures that were gathered online, seemed to be getting stuck. What was going on?

After our efforts and our campaign, it is time to take a moment to look back. In order to continue this campaign successfully, we need a moment of reflection. To see where things can and should be improved. Because we are still convinced that Europe deserves the right of the initiative. Why are we, AEGEE’s 15.000 active European citizens, not enough to make 1.000.000 people sign this initiative? What is the difference between this general initiative and other thematic citizens initiatives that are a great success? Why do we sign for our rights when we try to save the live of innocent seals? Or sign petitions in favour to be able to shop on Sunday? Why are most of us not interested in signing for our European rights? Why do even the most active Europeans, gathered in the NGOs supporting the ECI, have a hard time mobilising themselves and others in their organisations? Again we have the question: how could we bridge the gap between Europe and its citizens?

This having been said, we are proud to say we mobilised many young European citizens. In AEGEE we have informed and motivated lots of those active citizens using workshops. then sent them back to Europe. We discussed this form of direct democracy and thereby contributed to the matter. We managed to show people that Europe is theirs, not something far away and distant.

European decision-making is difficult, hard to understand, blurry and political. It is not clear who has a say in the processes and who is in charge of what. Of course, there are people that would like to keep it this way. So, there still remains a great task for people like Commissioner Wallström, who see the importance of keeping direct lines of communication with the citizens of Europe. Besides, it is also our

shared responsibility to make communication between the institutions and ourselves possible.

The question we return to every time is how to bridge the gap between Europe and its citizens. The answer to that question, in my opinion, is education. Some of the world’s most urgent and important problem situations stay unclear and underestimated because of lack of knowledge of the issues. Think about global warming. Since we are a bit more informed and educated about the issue, we tend to react, finally. When you do not know and you are not aware of the problem, it is hard to care.

This is why our focus inside AEGEE has always been to provide information and discuss about the ECI. We are very happy to see that the next flagship project, Education Unlimited, is the best step we could make in the process towards more democratic decision-making in Europe. By giving more prominence to informal education, we could teach more and, by that, involve more people. This will also mean that projects like the ECI get a fair chance. The first step has to be education. Allow people to learn about situations and let them make up their own mind. Maybe the ECI project could be seen as one step to far? And did we overestimate the activeness of the European citizen at this moment?

After ‘Education Unlimited’, and after some years, enough people will hopefully see that the decision-making process in Europe is bureaucratic and opaque. And after experiencing it through the project of the ECI, I can add that it is also undemocratic. If we want the ECI to succeed in the near future, we need to focus first on education and involvement. If we can provide a basis for that, the ECI will become the success it deserves to be.

Hereby I would like to thank the following people for their enthusiasm and contributions to this project:

Jessica Woerlee
AEGEE-Utrecht
Laure Oinidi
AEGEE-Toulouse / AEGEE-Köln
Solveig Lund
AEGEE-Debrecen
Christina Holthoff
AEGEE-Leuven





3 + 1 = EUROPEAN DECISION MAKING & CITIZENS INFLUENCE

by Ankie Knippenbergh

In the second line of action of Take Control a series of events took place around EU decision making and citizens' influence. Four events that look very different from the outside, but by a closer look we see that they are logically structured.

"EU (how) does it work?" in Leuven was centered on providing knowledge and critically discuss about the European Union. The second event, the Lobbying Training in Poznań was very much skill based, where participants got practical knowledge about how to lobby. The third event in Beograd was coined around one single action - drafting of a policy paper dealing with Visa issues. Then finally the concluding event in Strasbourg - Model European Union united all others, by simulating and evaluating the functioning of the European Union's decision making process.

With Take Control we wanted to stimulate people to get active in their societies. Our main target group was, of course, the participants but we should not forget to have a look at what the impact was on the locals involved. Therefore in this article we will gain an insight in the motivations and achievements as seen by the local organisers of the first three events. First we will be looking at why they decided to choose the topic, then how they dealt with it, what kind of participants they selected and finally what they achieved. Then finally we will have the presentation of first outcomes of the closing conference – Model European Union.

"We would be able to offer AEGEE members a speaking right from the centre of political Europe and offer them visits. The style of the event also came at the right time for AEGEE-Leuven as this was finally a chance to show the quality of our association to the university." These were the reasons Robin Verschuren gives to explain why AEGEE-Leuven decided to organise their event. From making the network stronger locally, also the quality of the entire network was a reason to organise. "We cannot be an efficient and appreciated NGO when no one hears our voice. Our conclusion was that it's not enough to work well and have a great and idealistic project. We have to have the support, we have to make people and institutions notice and support our ideas", says Arleta Bojke from AEGEE-Poznań. If anyone knows why this is so important it would be Dushica Brankov. She explains what motivated AEGEE-Beograd - "it was fascinating, the fact that we are able to make a change, that we do have what it takes to push harder for our ideals, in order to make our world better and more suitable for everyone. To put it more realistically, we had a chance to express our proposal for policy changes, regarding one of the biggest problems we are facing at the moment."

For AEGEE-Leuven, their location was a key factor to the event as it enabled them to create a very interesting program. "We combined interactive discussions on the use and functioning of the EU with workshops from specialists. Not only high level specialists from high posts in the commissions but also every day 'stagiaires' that could give insights on what it was like to work in the EU institutions." Also in Poznań, the program made use of external resources. "As trainers, not just experienced AEGEE members were invited, but also professional external trainers who gave a fresher perspective to the training. They did not focus only on theoretical knowledge on lobbying and its process, but the participants could practically improve their presentation and negotiation skills. They could also analyse lobbying strategies on particular examples." The challenge in Beograd was quite different - "we are already well informed about this topic, but we didn't stop there. We looked for information about the very beginning of introducing Visas, and for motives that caused it"

Diversity played a key role in their conference. "The participants were not just from the countries that need Visas, but also from European countries that have never had a problem to travel abroad. This is very important because in this way we had more points of view, more perspectives to the problem". Through the big number of applicants AEGEE-Leuven also had a very diverse group from over 15 different nationalities. For almost every participant, it was their first AEGEE event and to most of them it was also quite important. I still meet some participants on other events and am very glad that they got very active after their first big event being in Leuven. "The training in Poznań was smaller and therefore the participants were carefully selected, the participants were "people strictly interested in learning how to use negotiation and presentation skills to lobby for the good of AEGEE. During the workshops they had the case work so they could see if they were able to use the gathered knowledge."

Looking at what these events have contributed to the aims of Take Control, Arleta sees the real impact the training had on the participants as the main achievement. "They gathered new knowledge and skills during the training, especially because it was very innovative and never before had such training taken place. From another perspective, the Negotiation Days conference which took place for the 3rd time in Poznań, gained value added as it moved on as an international event for the first time." For Robin it is very important to see that they got their participants active in Europe afterwards. "The participants were very positive and we stayed in touch long after. Several joined local boards and organised really high quality events themselves. I'm sure that's not all thanks to the event but it's nice to see."



And even though we were a pre-event of MEU taking place 11 months before Model European Union, some people still applied to MEU!" For Duschica the achievements are numerous but "the biggest one is the Policy Paper we wrote during the seminar. We tried to find solutions to mobility problem that young people face every day, which is a simple example of discrimination. Discussing about this topic, we sought for the best solution, for the solution that is realistic and not idealistic."

MODEL EUROPEAN UNION (MEU) – THE GREAT FINAL!

by Annika Stienen

If you want to have a say in Europe, you need to know the system! – This is the philosophy behind the first Model European Union conference, taking place from March 4-10 in Strasbourg, which rounded off the AEGEE flagship project of 2006 "Take Control! Ways to democracy in Europe".

The idea of teaching about the European Union by means of a simulation game seemed to correspond to a strong demand among young people in Europe. Out of more than 400 qualified applications, 115 students from various countries could finally be invited to Strasbourg in order to participate in the conference, which for one year had been carefully prepared by the international MEU-team and AEGEE-Strasbourg. The event was a unique opportunity for the participants to get familiar with the European decision-making process, to experience the difficulty of defending a national or ideological point of view while at the same time reaching a European consensus, and to reflect on the EU's future with regard to four of the most important issues, namely enlargement, the Constitutional Treaty, reforms of the decision-making process and media.

The Simulation

While in practice, the EU has multiple ways of decision-making at its disposal, during the MEU simulation only the most common "co-decision procedure" was applied. To this end, the participants were split up into two groups, one of which simulated the Council of Ministers and the other the European Parliament. Both institutions discussed and amended the fictitious Commission proposals, which had been prepared by the content team in advance. One of the two directives dealt with the "Recognition of non-formal education", an innovative topic chosen due to its relevance for students who are active in civil society. The second topic was an "Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for the Western Balkans", based on a proposal in the style of the real IPA, which had been adopted

in 2006. At the end of the co-decision process, a conciliation committee took place, aiming at a compromise concerning the last, most controversial issues.

Changing perspective and gaining soft skills

Model European Union is more than just a simulation. It is about changing perspectives: Firstly, there were students assuming the roles of European policy-makers. The authentic environment of the Parliament building in Strasbourg, as well as the formal dress code, were supportive to this primary change of personality. Secondly, the roles were distributed in a way that all participants represented other countries than their own. Apart from this, MEU is about gaining soft skills: Presenting one's position in front of the audience, negotiating, trying to convince others and find allies, working in international teams. "Indeed I can tell that I've learned so many things during this simulation: dealing with the formal environment but also with an international team of very nice people. I think it was amazing how we got along with each other and sharing and enjoying our cultural and language differences. I realize now it was an intense and rich experience which strengthened important values like tolerance and open-mindedness", said Nicoleta Benga, in the role of an MEP.

Apart from the simulation, the event was enriched by a complementary programme including a visit in the city of Strasbourg and of the Council of Europe, several workshops, a discussion with Catherine Trautmann, MEP, as well as several occasions to explore Strasbourg's nightlife...

While sound evaluation should still be done, it is already clear that AEGEE has proved once again its professionalism concerning content events. This project has the potential of becoming a recurring event in our association, which would reinforce AEGEE's visibility on the European scene.

Annika Stienen - she is 23 years old and studies European Studies. In 2004-2005 she was Vice President of AEGEE-Osnabrück, her local. Afterwards she went on Erasmus in Cluj-Napoca and participated in a European School. Last year she got involved in MEU.





THE RAINBOW ON THE DANUBE- TRAINING FOR DEMOCRACY

by Gülece SENEL

This is the story of a rainbow that appeared after a cold, stormy, winter rain. This is the story of a coloured harmony in a rainbow which showed within a conflict and between dreams and reality. And finally, this is the real story of AEGEE and Training For Democracy (T4D) that brought everything a rainbow represents to many lives...

On 7th July 2006, two green, brilliant eyes belonging to Patrick Hanckmann, the manager of the training, welcomed us to Budapest, Hungary and the training started. 12 participants from Turkey to Germany, Russia to Poland and the trainers Patrick Hanckmann, Kim Zwitserloot, Rob Tesh, Betina Szkudlarek, Else Boss and Sandra Geldmacher were each a colour in the rainbow that emerged on the Danube River after a warm afternoon rain.

In accordance with the aims of Take Control-Ways to Democracy in Europe, i.e. to train high school students all around Europe on active citizenship and democracy, the goal of the T4D was to train AEGEE members who may act as multipliers in their countries as trainers for democracy. Taking place in between 7-12 July 2006 in Budapest, the training included lectures and workshops on "Presentation Techniques, Workshop Administration, Active Citizenship and Democracy". In addition to being well planned and organized, it was based

on simulations that gave the participants the chance to imply their theoretical knowledge.

The rainbow on the Danube River, which at first was hidden behind some clouds, became more visible day by day, as the participants attained experience and self-confidence in addition to gaining "team" consciousness. Moreover, with the hospitality of AEGEE-Budapest people and their great efforts in the organization, at the end of 5 wonderful days, the rainbow was brilliant and winked to the future with a smiling face.

The Training For Democracy was more than a regular training, it was a proof of the good combination of well planned content, valuable trainers, amazing participants, marvelous congeniality of AEGEE-Budapest and the existence of colour harmony in a rainbow that represents "all different, but all equal" voices in a democracy...

What is left from the training are strong friendships, the echoes of laughter, happy faces, prospective trainers, motivated members, new projects, a permanent rainbow that has begun to spread its colours all around Europe and two Turkish girls, who carried their T4D experiences to the Understanding Europe Project...

BRINGING THE RAINBOW TO THE TURKISH SKY - TELL ME ABOUT [YOUR] EUROPE!

by Gülece SENEL

Becoming a founding member of the European Council in 1949 and starting negotiations with the EU on 3rd October 2005, Turkey paved the way for a new kind of relations between the European countries. Therefore, "Europe, European identity and the place of Turkey in these issues" became a more important subject in the recent period.

In 2005, in its 11th anniversary, being one of the most active antennas in AEGEE network, AEGEE-Ankara started to work on a project called "Understanding Europe" whose purpose is similar to Take Control and it is to introduce civil society consciousness to the youth by means of informal peer education. The project mainly targets high school students who will contribute to the future of the Turkish society, in addition to increasing their self-responsibilities and their sensitivity for the benefit of the society. The project intends to lead youth to search, question and criticize in this context.

With this project, it is aimed to inform high school students about the concepts "European History, European Institutions, Values of Europe, The EU-Turkey Relations and Civil Society", to raise their attention towards Europe and to establish "Europe Clubs" at high schools where students can discuss and learn about Europe, then share their ideas at the inter-school debates.

The project targets students between ages 15-18 who live in "Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Antalya, Diyarbakir, Erzurum and Trabzon". The cities were chosen in consideration that each city represents a geographical region within Turkey. Indirect beneficiaries of the project are the teachers, families of the students and youth non-governmental organizations.



Understanding Europe Project consists of 2 main stages; "Understanding Europe" and "Explaining Europe." The Understanding Europe stage is based on two framework aiming to train the team for the interactions; as instructors and organizers. The first step "Seminars on Europe" aims to provide the project team members a thematic background. In this context, 6 seminars were organized during March-May 2006 and another 7 seminars were held in December 2006. The seminars broadened the perspectives of the project team on the topics of "European Identity and Values, Turkey and the European Union Relations" with the participation of specialized academicians, authors and researchers. Moreover, seminars drew the attention of more than a hundred students from different universities in Ankara and were organised in collaboration with Middle East Technical University Center for European Studies.

The second step of the project was a training program, "Training for Trainers-T4T": projected to introduce an interactive understanding on theoretical and practical applications about: "Presentation Techniques, Lobbying Activities, Conflict Resolution and Workshop administration." Thus, project members achieved 'trainer' skills for the upcoming mobile trainings. This T4T took place in Ankara between the 4 and 7th February 2007. With its context, T4T pursued the same aims and approaches as the Training for Democracy. Certainly, Bahar Ozcan and I, the two Turkish girls in Budapest, carried our T4D experiences to T4T.

The second stage of the project, "Explaining Europe" consists of three steps. With its slogan "Tell Me About (Your) Europe!", The Mobile trainings step of the project will start in March 2007. In this training, by means of non-formal peer education, it is aimed to inform high school students with different socio-cultural backgrounds about the concepts "European Identity and Values, European Institutions, The EU-Turkey Relations and Active Citizenship" in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Antalya, Diyarbakir, Erzurum and Trabzon. During the workshops, surveys, which are prepared by METU Center of European Studies (CES), will be distributed and at the end of the project feedbacks will be evaluated. In the frame of this project, it is projected to establish "Europe Clubs" at the high schools and these clubs are expected to organize activities, cooperate with the local NGOs and consequently, join together with the civil society as active citizens in participatory democracy. After the completion of the Mobile Trainings, a Final Conference will be held in Ankara. A representative student from each established Europe Club and a teacher of every school; local NGO representatives, European Union and government authorities will be invited.

The Conference will be on the topics "Civil Society, Active Citizenship, Participatory Democracy, the EU and the Integration Process of Turkey".

Workshops will be held throughout the conference and students are expected to participate in these workshops and share the experience they gained.

In the final step, a representative high school student of each city and eight project members are going to engage in lobbying activities at the European Parliament, European Commission and other institutions in Brussels. As a result of the negotiations, the project is expected to achieve international political reputation and contribute to the establishment of Europe Clubs and their merging with international student organizations like OBESSU (Organizing Bureau of School Student Unions).

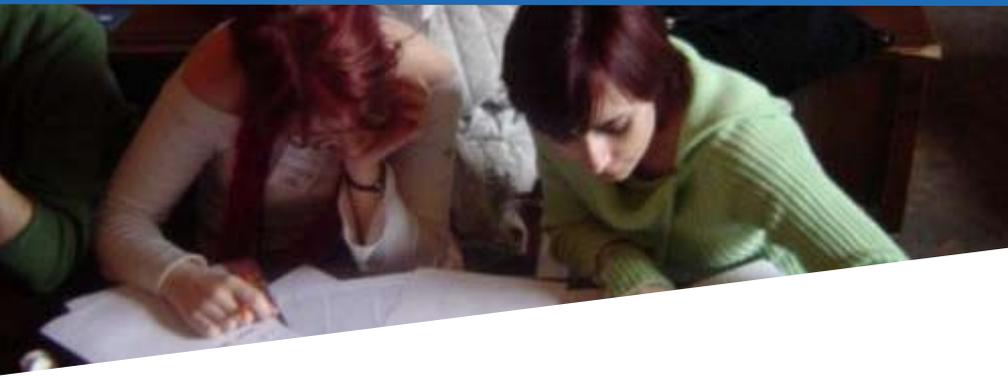
Understanding Europe Project is partially financed by British Embassy-Ankara and Turkish Education Association (TED) and Middle East Technical University (METU) with Center of European Studies (CES) are the current project partners.

UNDER THE RAINBOW, TELL ME ABOUT (YOUR) EUROPE!

As a participant of Training For Democracy and the coordinator of Understanding Europe Project, I believe that it is crucial to work on projects aiming to raise the consciousness of high school students about democracy and in the long-term, contribute to the active involvement of youth in decision making processes and civil society. Since they are the prospective leaders, young people should learn more about their environment in addition to being aware of what democracy and active citizenship actually mean. Consequently, they can respect different voices in their societies and in the world. In democracy, different voices create the colour harmony in the rainbow. Therefore, Under The Rainbow lets Tell About (Our) Europe!

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

From the first day of AEGEE to today, 200.000 people joined AEGEE.



MaDness: HOW MEDIA CAN BE CHANGED

by Ankie Knippenbergh and Vincent de Bruijn

PDM Brussels 2005 – The start

In the summer of 2005, around 20 people came together in the house in Brussels, to discuss ways to democracy in Europe. They realized that a lot of ways and ideas were connected to the idea of using the media to reach the general public. The questions were what we could do about the lack of media attention on European issues and the general lack of European wide media. The solution was found in creating the media content ourselves. Soon enough, there were many suggestions of making documentaries, articles, etc. Because media have such an important role to play in democracies and the functioning of democracies, we decided to involve these ideas into the flagship project.

“Take Control” was born

The name “Take Control” reflected the content of all of its parts. No talking but acting and active involvement. Like “MaD” (Media and Democracy), the new name of the media part, with its active workshops, trainings and contest, its mission was to set out and “take control” of the media. After the brainstorm workshop at the Agora in Izmir and the project meeting in December in Tartu, the aims of the “MaD” project were clear. The project was twofold: on the one hand it had the mission to attract journalists to shine a light on the parts of the “Take Control” project and also other projects in AEGEE. Secondly, its mission was to train and educate young people in writing quality content for media outlets and motivate them to write about the pan-European issues they themselves were interested in.

Workshop EBM Sofia and Agora Warszawa

The workshop in Sofia received a lot of interest; many people applied beforehand via the EBM application form. Participants received a basic training in writing an article during the creative writing course. This was intended to give a group of young Europeans more experience and knowledge how exactly to structure an article, what to do and what not to do. It was also a motivation for them to use the media more and to join one of the longer training courses. Next, they had the chance to apply their new skills to write their own article on a topic of their interest. The best one would be published in the next “News Bulletin”. Several good articles were produced and the winning article received a place in the next NB.

During a two-session workshop in Warszawa the concept of Sofia was elaborated even more. The first session consisted

of the training part, similar to the creative writing course in Sofia. Then, the participants had time to work on their articles between the two workshop sessions, for instance, to make interviews and gain more input. In the second session these articles were then discussed and given feedback on.

Media Exchange München

This training focused on film and photography. During one week the participants learned the “ins” and “outs” of photo editing and film cutting. The training was put in the format of an intercultural exchange aiming at non-formal learning and practical experiences within the fields of media. The concept is based on conjointly prepared intercultural case studies dealing with urban life, their reflection and their depiction by the means of media such as photo, film and writing. A well-balanced mixture of workshops, thematic and field work, and the use of several means of media give space for experience, reflection and creativity. The case studies focus on cultural and social aspects and on distinctive social characteristics of a region.

The evaluation

In the end the question should be asked - What did we achieve over the past year in relation to European Media? As we already realized from the beginning, not much could be done on one-year work, since the problems related to the European dimension of media are numerous. But the format we chose, working actively with media content, aims at making a start and also making sure that the youth in Europe can produce a voice that can be heard. Another reason to call this project a success is that it was efficient in cost and time. The courses that were given, have increased the number of active Europeans that now are able to state their opinion in a more professional way.





ON A MISSION TO DEMOCRACY

by Ankie Knippenbergh

Subject: URGENT, update on EOM Azerbaijan, NOW OR NEVER

From: Olaf

Date: Wed, 12 Oct 2005

He told me what I already was suspicious of, that the government in Azerbaijan is not cooperating in any way with foreign organisations that want to observe elections. Furthermore, he told me that the chance that a small organisation like ours would get any accreditation, was very minor. And as I explained to you before, without the accreditation we cannot even enter Azerbaijan.

Organising Election Observation Missions is not an easy thing to do, it takes flexibility, courage, creativity and maybe foremost persistence and dedication. But it is also something very concrete and has a very direct impact on the local community and on the participants. That is why the already existing missions became a part of "Take Control" with the expected results – being a contribution to the observation of elections in nascent Eastern European democracies. Participants got educated about the development of democracy in Eastern Europe and about democratic processes in general and inspired to take a closer interest in the democratic processes they themselves are involved in.

Subject: AEGEE and election monitoring: a promising avenue...

From: Gaetano

Date: Sat, 8 Oct 2005

Over the past couple of years, and especially since I have started to work on/with youth NGOs on behalf of an international organization, I have become very much concerned with the fact that for AEGEE (and it is the case for other youth NGOs) the real challenge for the 3rd millennium is to promote projects and actions which might have a REAL impact on the world we live in. Striving to take part in election observing missions is definitely one of these ways.

Despite being a challenging task, the missions are something very highly valued by all the parties involved. It gives the participants a chance to experience something really extraordinary, actually checking and controlling democratic processes. Apart from that it also brings people from different places in Europe together in areas that are difficult to reach.

Subject: AEGEE EOM "TAKE CONTROL" project, UA elections

From: Juscha

Date: Mon, 9 Jan 2006

As you all know 26th of March 2006 there are, again, elections in Ukraine and again AEGEE would like to play an active role in ensuring and promoting democratic elections during these times of change. This time on a much larger scale with more cooperation with larger and more independent bodies that come from Ukraine and abroad.

After a successful mission for the elections to the parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan, two more missions followed during the year 2007. First the Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine and secondly, on 5th of July 2006, the observation mission on the 5th parliamentary elections in Republic of Macedonia. Getting observers never was a problem; as soon as the open call was made, many people were eager to participate. More problematic was raising funds, for the organisation of the mission was a lot of times quite ad-hoc and couldn't be planned ahead.

Subject: Movie from Election Observation Mission online!

From: Thijs

Date: Tue, 23 May 2006

You can download it from

<http://www.aegEE.tv/movies/archive/movies/307.html>

its about 30 megabyte.

see you all!

The missions were as always followed by a press release, stating the findings and the observations of the missions. Next to this there was a movie made during the mission in Ukraine. Also pictures were uploaded on the website and several workshops were given at the missions. In order to inspire even more people to take an interest in our democracies, participants were asked to speak here. Elina rightly pointed out that 'having no past experience in election observation whatsoever haven't restrained her to take part in it, as AEGEE provided everyone with trainings on election observation techniques'. She also stressed the fact that by participating in an EOM, you gain a most valuable experience.



Elina rightly pointed out that 'having no past experience in election observation whatsoever haven't restrained her to take part in it, as AEGEE provided everyone with trainings on election observation techniques.' She also stressed the fact that by participating in an EOM, you gain a most valuable experience.

Subject: Godspeed, last mail before EOM Skopje starts!
From: D r a g a n
Date: Wed, 5 Jul 2006

*Hey!
 only a few hours before the elections :)*

OK, about the training I think it was pretty much OK. We had all the original voting materials and later on we had simulations. So the guys - believe me - are prepared ;) About the code, I had it previously and already gave to our observers a hard copy. I also gave them the original OCSE forms to fill in tomorrow.

Goodnight

The international observers were well prepared for their work through an "election information package", a mailing list and through seminars. The trainings took place during the days prior to the elections. There were meetings with representatives of political parties and NGOs. Next to that, seminars on the local law and election procedures were given.

Also after the ending of "Take Control" the Election Observation Mission will continue...

Subject: Election Observation Update
From: Emiel
Date: Fri, 2 Mar 2007

Hi all,

Today I got two emails of people who are interested in an EOM to Kosovo! Great to hear this.

Coming week I will be at the Model European Union in Strasbourg, as a journalist. So, if you happen to be around, there is a great chance you will see/meet me somehow! Would be cool to meet some people.

Anyway. During the MEU there will be a workshop on EOM on Friday! I was asked to host it together with the CD. My idea for this workshop was to discuss and get new ideas for the next EOM to Kosovo.

Last but not least, after the workshop I think we should get really started forming a team. People that told me they are interested, are in the attached list. If you're not there, tell me! :) Maybe we can organize an online meeting or something.

Thats all! Hope to see you all somewhere, maybe in Strasbourg, maybe in Kosovo...

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

Currently AEGEE has 605 different active mailing lists on the AEGEE server.



DEMOCRACY IN THE MAKING - 2 AEGEE CONFERENCES FOCUS ON DEMOCRATISATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

by Stefan May

Inspired by the dynamics of the changes in Georgia and Ukraine and concerned with the increasing pressure on democratic initiatives and independent minded young people in Belarus, two AEGEE conferences focused on the role of students and Youth in the political transformation of Eastern Europe.

The 4-day "Transition to Democracy in Central Eastern Europe" conference organised by AEGEE-Lodz started on the 7th of October 2006 with a panel discussion under the heading of Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (then: Vice President of the EP; now: chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs) for more than 200 Polish students and the 40 participants from all over Europe.

Lectures concerning the geopolitical aspect as well as the dramatic socioeconomic changes that took place in Eastern Europe in the last 15 years were held by Ph. D. Zurawski and Madera (Lodz University). Especially first hand information about the diplomatic affairs and importance of support for emerging democracies by actors such as the USA and the EU were delivered by Mary Curtin (Political Counselor, U.S. Embassy), Sorin Vasile (First Secretary, Romania Embassy), Josef Kolar (First Secretary, Czech Republic Embassy). This part of the event was attended by over 100 students from various Lodz Universities and faculties, which showed the interest of many young people in these developments.

This prepared the conference-participants for workshops concerned with the question: What and how can we, the students, the Youth of Europe do, to help the success of Democracy and the development of a strong Civil Society in this part of Europe. Cooperation and Solidarity among the young European Civil society were the Key words that the participants emphasised in a working paper that demanded further attention on Visa facilitation, training and networking possibilities for Youth activists from Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

The event was organized in cooperation with NATO, European Parliament, Polish Prime Minister Office, European Institute, Lodz City Council, Lodzkie Vojevodship Office, University of Lodz and International Politics Working Group of AEGEE Europe. The main coordinator of this event was Konrad Gotlib (more info: konrad_gotlib@yahoo.com) from AEGEE-Lodz.

The conference "Civil Society & Political Transformation in Central Eastern Europe", which took place in Bamberg from the 12th to the 14th of May 2006, put a spotlight on the academic aspect of the recent changes. Political scientists as the renowned Klaus von Beyme (Heidelberg) adapted the political science concept of "transitology" in order to explain the recent developments in Central Eastern Europe. Von Beyme also stressed that the Western European democracies are "far from perfect". Martin Heidenreich (Bamberg) however stressed the Economic change prior to EU accession while Petr Just (Praha) pointed out the difficult heritage of communism for the liberalisation process of society. The focus on identity and search for identity as well as the participatory culture in the post soviet countries by Nicolas Szafowal (Ukrainian University Munich) and Masha Neszerova (EHU Minsk) opened the discussion on the possibilities on a change in Belarus comparable to Ukraine. While a considerable part of Ukraine embraces the values of the free world and a distinct Ukrainian national identity was created similar to neighbouring countries like Poland or the Baltic states, Belarus maintains a specific "post-soviet" mentality that is further enforced with censorship and centralised cultural policies of the Lukashenka government. However, further prospects of partnership with the EU and support by democratic minded civil society groups from EU as well as Russia could help especially the young people in democratising Belarus.

A photo exhibition called "Orange Sky Project" by Kateryna Radchenko captured the spirit of the Democratic revolution on Kiev's Maidan square and passed it on to the participants. Main organisers of this conference were Florian Amon and Markus Hammerschmitt (more info: www.bamcon.de) of AEGEE-Bamberg.





CONTROL TAKEN... LET'S SEE THE RESULTS!

by Ankie Knippenbergh

By results, we are talking about changes in the social reality that we intended to address in the first place, but also changes in people (social educational processes), in organizations and partnerships, in the community relations, etc... (source: T-kit Project Management)

Before starting with the evaluation of Take Control based on the objectives, these evaluation criteria were chosen because they were set out to measure our achievements from the beginning, being the backbone of the project. We will have a short look at how this project fitted within AEGEE's aims, as they are laid out in the strategic plan. Take Control worked on several fields concretely in line with the strategic plan, here we will only name the aims connected with these concrete measures from the strategic plan.

These are:

- Increase inclusion and involvement of young people, especially from disadvantaged groups, in the civil society
- AEGEE's vision of Active Citizenship widely known and understood
- Inform and involve members in debating current topics on the European agenda
- Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of AEGEE's work (source: Strategic Plan of AEGEE-Europe)

This results section started off with the presentation of our ideas and ideals. For the team who was enthusiastic, young and dynamic full of spirit and distributed all over Europe, it has been an intense year. With hard work, lots of meetings which every time were a big lift to their motivation and energy, the team with over 70 people always believed in their goals and most importantly good friendship. Finally their aims pointed towards the series of events, spread over the flagship year. The past pages have showed the results of the separate project parts, now in the following section we will see how parts have worked together to form the dynamic and broad flagship Take Control, Ways to democracy in Europe.

Evaluation bases on the objectives of Take Control

Increase the involvement and engagement of young people in the (European) political process.

This is the central sentence in this project, which merely implies that we wanted to present the topic politics and democracy in a more interesting way to young people. We wanted to show that it is not something far away, but that they are the ones who need to take the responsibility for. How we worked towards this goal, will be revised by looking at the objectives to see which progress we made on the parts.

Inform young people about how they can influence political decisions (including those made on the European level).

As one can see this objective is coined around education, before one can influence and get involved. First an insight in the processes is needed, for it is imperative for one to know where to act. With the entire project we have given the European Youth an opportunity to participate. Through e-mail newsletters, articles in publications like News Bulletin and Key to Europe, presentations and workshops on statutory and regional meetings, we dissolved the project to a big group of Europeans.

Next to that an important part of the European Citizens Initiative dealt and still deals with informing people how to use the initiative, where it can be used for and why that is important. This goes together with collecting support for the initiative to get enforced in the European law. Although this process is still continuing, we can say with the amount of workshops done about the ECI we have reached a decent number of people.

Equip young people with the skills needed to influence political decisions.

Next step of getting young people involved in the political process is of course making sure they are skilled to do so. The most skills based sub-project was the Media and Democracy. The project very directly got people to write and handle other forms of media. They got support from an experienced team so they would improve their skills. The format chosen in the workshops during already existing meetings was very efficient. Also the exchanges with involved people from four countries gave an attractive extra dimension to the project. Now not only the skills could be taught but also the delicate matter of how different cultures understand and use media could be discussed.

Another skills based training took place as a part of the EU Decision making and Citizens Influence with the Lobbying Training in Poznań. During this event the participants did several workshops and gained practical experience how to successfully lobby for their interests.

Develop positive attitudes among young people towards political participation.

Even when young people know what to do and how to influence the political processes, they need to be willing to invest time in these issues. Therefore we have chosen to organise events that were very interesting and have an impact on the lives of young people.



Also the Training for Democracy was developed to create positive attitudes within high school students. The very strong point of this project is that we have taught young people how to educate or maybe better motivate other young Europeans, to give them the tools to work in their democracies and spread their own ideas.

Then last to mention are the Election Observation Missions very concrete actions towards ensuring democracies, to countries you normally would not visit. The missions have proved to give a very strong motivation to work on democracies as well for the participants observing as for the countries in which they were observed.

Inform young people about the European Union and its decision-making processes.

Since the European Union has big problems with binding the citizens of Europe to Europe, we decided that the first step to involve the young Europeans in their Europe was to explain how the Union actually functions. And next to that look at the problematic areas to see how things can be improved.

First conference was organized at the core of the Union. The participants of the 'EU (how) does it work?' conference visited the European institutions in Brussels. Next to that they had several interactive workshops and lectures on how the Union functions. These were constructed in a way that they gave reason to debate.

Looking at the problematic area was the conference held in Beograd - Bricks in the Visa wall which dealt with - for us - most urgent problems in Europe. With regards to current visa policies, a policy paper was drafted during the conference to trigger an initiative to solve the problems around visas.

Evaluate and improve the means of communication between the EU and (young) citizens.

Then as a final objective we wanted to work on the ways of communication. If Europe wants to get closer to its citizens, they need to be able to talk to and with each other.

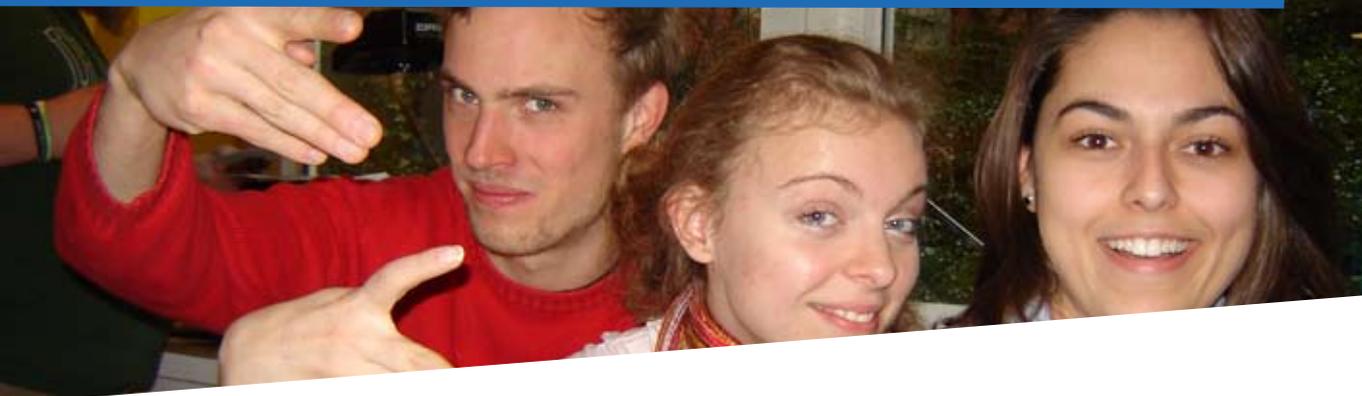
Here the Media and Democracy plays a part since the media can be the voice of the people. If one wants to get his voice heard, he will need the media. Also the European Citizens' Initiative is a direct tool to get the people's voice into the European Institutions. But the most important part was played by the biggest conference - Model European Union. This simulation played by 115 students from all over Europe created an opportunity to actually experience the decision making process as it takes place. So armed with this experience the last days of the event were spent evaluating the process and figuring out improvements that can be made.

So the final question we ask is: did we Take Control? What is left to be done?

In the case like democracy, there is always more to be done. But looking back we can say that considering the framework we were working in, we (1) reached a lot of young Europeans (2) spread the energy and idealism for working on democracy (3) worked on the objectives we put ourselves set out. Next to that we still and always will have to keep actively involved in our democracies. With the continuation of some sub-projects as separate projects, we will also Take Control in the future.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

The longest AEGEE event – excluding SUs – was PASS - Performing Arts Summer Schools in Gdansk [2004] and in Crete [2005] and lasted 21



EDUCATION UNLIMITED – IMPROVING EUROPEAN EDUCATION!

by Radu Racareanu

“Every person – child, youth and adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning.” World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs (World Conference on Education 1990)

The changes introduced by the Bologna Process, the importance of non-formal education, and the access to mobility – at least one of these three issues has been on the mind of every European student. How does the new “3+2” study cycle increase the quality of my studies? Why is that great training course I took part in, where I learnt so much, not recognised? Which mobility programme best fits my plans? In the best case, these are just three of dozens of questions on the minds of young people. In the worst case, young people know too little about the education system to ask any questions at all.

AEGEE has a long tradition of tackling the topic of education in Europe, since its members are mostly European students. The successful lobby for the implementation of the Erasmus programme, active participation in international conferences on the future of higher education, or projects such as EU-RECA and the Bologna-Prague-Berlin Project, together with numerous intensive non-formal education activities (AEGEE itself can be looked upon as a highly developed non-formal education system): all these prove that education deserves to be among the four main pillars of AEGEE.

However, “during the last four years AEGEE has not paid any attention to higher education and has lost its stakeholder position to other organisations,” confesses Theijs van Welij, President of AEGEE and former Projects Director. “Being aware of all the educational reforms taking place in every single European country, it was my personal belief that AEGEE should again initiate a project on education, in order to inform our members about current reforms and to win back our credibility towards those in institutions and governments who make decisions,” he continues. This is the “Education Unlimited” project

The Bologna Process at grass-roots level

Many have heard of it, but there are still too few young people who actually know what is behind the fancy name. The goals of the Bologna Process are: the establishment of easily understandable and comparable degree systems; a two stage system of Bachelors and Masters courses (5 years in total), with the option of a PhD as the third stage; and a credit system for the easy recognition of exams and quality assurance of curriculum and teaching. The Bologna Process also aims to promote mobility among students and academic staff, strengthening the European dimension of higher education and laying the foundations for life-long learning (LLL).

On the one hand, the goals are highly commendable and that is why 45 European countries have joined the Bologna Process. On the other hand, many people have started to question what kind of risks are entailed by such a process, from both a theoretical and a practical point of view. The excessive focus on employability or the structuring of education and the economic models used in evaluations, as well as overly abrupt changes that do not maintain the best aspects of existing systems, are only some of the criticisms that have been made of the Bologna Process. Another problem that needs to be overcome is the fact that the implementation of agreed measures is only the responsibility of participating countries, while the people who actually make the decisions essentially remain the same. This issue has led to the development of the Open Method for Coordination (OMC), and hopefully the debates will also produce additional possible solutions.

Given its status and expertise, AEGEE does not try to pass judgement on the process as such. However, it takes the responsibility of disseminating all the available information to the grass-roots level, thus empowering and enabling young people to take part in the existing debates and to provide their valuable feedback.



Non-formal and Formal Education – two sides of the same coin

If, less than 15 years ago, the first thing that came to people's minds when talking about education was school and university, then "education" today encompasses a much larger perspective. Education has become an object of study in itself, and the informal and non-formal types are starting to be given more credit than before.

The formal system itself is starting to go beyond just offering factual information, recognising the role of education as an abstract process that applies a framework to reality. And the reality is a situation in which everyone provides information, new attitudes, values, mentalities, but where they also develop new skills. Even in former times, people were conscious that academic ability alone was not enough for a person to succeed, as shown by the expression "school of life". Formal education is organised and recognised, but many complain that the top-down approach often impedes motivation and that there is not enough room for creativity. On the other hand, non-formal education (NFE), with its more flexible approach and interaction, facilitates learning but loses efficiency as it lacks long-term planning. At the same time, it is hard to make a direct comparison between different non-formal education courses because of their high degree of flexibility. Informal education always comes as a by-product of both formal and non-formal education. It brings the practical element to the fore, and one can learn from others' experiences. However, in the process one can be influenced by customs and rituals of which one is not aware; the information can be incomplete or lacking in quality; and one is not necessarily always aware that one is learning.

In the last few years, new concepts of education have also been developed. These are built on the three forms mentioned above, proving that they are all inter-dependent and necessary. Thus life-long learning represents the simultaneous combination of all three forms (for example: you are following training courses at work while studying for your Masters, and of course informal education takes place all the time), while blended learning involves a programme comprising formal and non-formal education, such as non-formal education methods applied within a formal education system. Finally, life-long learning expresses the idea that real education takes place all the time and does not finish once school is over, but continues throughout a person's life.

AEGEE has great experience as a provider of non-formal education for young people. All AEGEE members have come to recognise first hand that formal and non-formal education go together. "The focus on non-formal education, the great

things I have learnt in AEGEE and which I strongly believe should be recognised, are what made me get involved in Education Unlimited," explains Violeta Joitoiu, a project team member from Bucharest. In the meantime, AEGEE resolves to continue to demonstrate the benefits of non-formal education for young people; this is done through various partnerships, such as that with "YnterACT", a project designed to improve communication skills through non-formal education.

Some of the expected results of Education Unlimited

- 1. AEGEE antennae inform and encourage young people to make use of LLL programmes: ERASMUS, ERASMUS Mundus and TEMPUS.**
- 2. Presentation of the evidence for the impact of non-formal education and best practices, and its recognition by representatives of formal education.**
- 3. AEGEE antennae establish and maintain debates on education with local stakeholders.**
- 4. AEGEE gives its input on education and mobility with regard to the construction of National Qualification Frameworks.**
- 5. The Bologna Process Follow-up Group takes up arguments presented by AEGEE for the recognition of NFE and the European dimension of education.**
- 6. Inclusion and involvement of students from disadvantaged areas in education reform (e.g. Bologna Process).**



Interview with Joanna Piskunowicz, Project Manager of Education Unlimited, former Vice-President and Human Resources Director of AEGEE and former President of AEGEE-Poznan.

K2E: Living for a year in Brussels as a member of the AEGEE Comité Directeur was probably very intense. Why did you take on the challenge of managing such a project?

Joanna Piskunowicz: It's hard to fight old addictions like working day and night for AEGEE. Seriously, I still didn't feel that I had made as much of an impact as I had wanted. I believe that projects, ambitious European projects, are the thing that makes AEGEE live and turn its aims into reality. I felt the need and ambition to push AEGEE back in the direction of where it belongs: on the European scene, having a voice and making a change to European education.

How do you perceive your experience in "Education Unlimited" so far?

I am particularly happy with the positive feedback, confirming everybody's need for the project: AEGEE members, representatives of other NGOs, and even some professors and parents. The greatest but at the same time the most demanding aspect is the external dimension of the project: institutions, NGOs, opinion leaders with which we have started discussing possible cooperation. At the same time, internally, it is fascinating to follow the delicate thread of each team member's personal motivation – so many nationalities, so many different competences, but still with a lot to learn along the way, building personal relationships but taking a professional approach to tasks, while working mostly online.

What do you expect from the project at this point?

We started very ambitiously. At first, it was almost like we wanted to improve everything to do with European education; we simply had too many broad aims for just one project. We therefore needed to be more focused and omit some aspects, which of course was not an easy thing to do. But now we focus on student participation in the education process, acknowledging the complementary nature of formal and non-formal education. And actually this is what I expect now: more involvement and the courage to voice opinions, as well as the opportunity for different but equally beneficial ways of learning. By starting with AEGEE members, then members of other NGOs, then regular students, we hope to finally take this to those who actually take the decisions, thus making it possible!

Finally, what is your personal vision of European education in 10 years' time?

I'm afraid that I might be too idealistic for 10 years' time. But most of all I would like to see young people have access to all kinds of education. Young people should be given credit for what they know and what they can do, not for how or where they acquired that knowledge or those abilities.

I want to see education for young people develop in the spirit of European cooperation and common European values, taking the best of the diverse solutions available and teaching them to take responsibility for what is around them.

Personal Involvement and Active Listening

Many obvious statements can be made about education: it is important, it is complex, it is dynamic. For some, all these sound like "boring stuff", for others "I'm too small, nobody would listen to me anyway", or simply "it is other people's business".

The reality, however, is that it is our business; it affects each and every one of us. The simple fact of being able to read these lines means that we have had access to education. It means we have been involved in the education process. Education, no matter what type – formal, non-formal or informal – accompanies each and every one of us from cradle to grave. Each one of us is therefore responsible for developing the education process, no matter what position we occupy within it. In this way, active participation on the part of the learner and active listening on the part of the education provider (be it school teacher, university professor, trainer or parent) in the design and implementation of the education

process become fundamental rights. Indeed, these rights become obligations if there is a desire to make things better.

"Education Unlimited", despite being a project that brings together much dedication, effort and expectation, is nevertheless only one means, only one of many possible contributions that can be made to improving European education. And these contributions do not mean organising Europe-wide projects. First and foremost, an active approach to education is required – so we can clarify our learning aims and ask what the best way is to achieve them. This means sharing our thoughts and opinions with our colleagues and raising these questions to our teachers, who, slowly but surely, are becoming more and more open to what the students have to say. Walking comes before running. In the same way, these small steps of active involvement will train young people for the life-long education marathon.



AEGEE'S VISIT CARDS - SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS



October 2006, Tblisi - Case Study Trip to Georgia and Azerbaijan



ACTING BEYOND OUR EUROPEAN SHORES: THE YOUTH & GLOBALISATION PROJECT

by Alexianne Galea

This world has become a melancholic strain, where not everything is running as smooth as it should be... Yet, the thrill that in our own little world, as young committed citizens, we can somehow aid in this regard, has generated the idea behind the Youth and Globalisation Project within AEGEE.

Originally starting as the Year Plan Project of AEGEE-Europe for the year 2003, the Youth & Globalisation Project has continued ever since through its mission: to engage active youths across Europe in discussing the current issues of our time. Indeed, having the participation of European youth, we seek to investigate the role we occupy in civil society and aim at exploring alternative ways to enhance such participation so as to successfully promote progressive change within communities in an effort to stimulate further the interaction of cross-border dialogue across Europe and beyond.

Over the years, the Project sought to move along the line of Active Citizenship. Indeed, the entire 2003 was dedicated to raise awareness on one of the major issues of our time – globalisation in relation to five thematic pillars, these being: politics, economics, culture, civil society and geo-communications. In effect, the project attempted to not solely raise the concerns of young people in view of the globalisation reality but generated a discussion, which developed an action strategy addressing the globalisation debate, through the five thematic pillars. Certainly, a highlight in this regard remains the World Youth Summit on Globalisation held in December 2003 at the European Parliament in Brussels that involved the participation of over 150 young delegates from across the globe, who produced the Final Strategy Paper on Globalisation, a resolution with hot burning debates as its basic ingredients!

The conscious concern towards Peace and Stability featured high in the format of the Youth and Globalisation Project. At the one year commemoration from the Madrid Bombings attacks, in strategic partnership with Club de Madrid, an entourage of European youths engaged in the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security, which featured illustrious worldwide personalities such as Kofi Annan. The Youth for Peace and Stability European Conference in March 2005 followed where the same European youths could voice

their concerns on the contemporary security issues through a multitude of diverse activities paving the search for efficient working tools promoting anti-conflict strategies in local communities.

Moreover, in an effort to engage in European Integration and the consequent Future of Europe Debate, the Youth & Globalisation Project embarked with a European Seminar having Youth on the Front Line. In truth, the Praha "Seminar Youth on the Frontline: Creating a Sustainable Future for Europe" provided young European leaders with a forum, where the discussion centred upon the role of youth empowerment as a fundamental key for the enhancement of civil society, which is seen as a chief feature for a more comprehensive European decision-making process – hence, counteracting on the existent democratic deficit of the Community.

Undoubtedly, throughout the years, the Youth & Globalisation Project has matured into a unique platform, where various academics and officials from several different international institutions have pooled in their knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm to a diverse spectrum of active youth from across Europe and beyond. This could not have been possible, were it not for the considerable financial support received over the years from International Institutions together with all the strategic partners gathered, as this has made it possible for the Youth & Globalisation Project to continue pursuing its objectives and goals.

Proudly enough, the Youth & Globalisation Project decisively remains an unconventional project in many ways, as it sought to go beyond our accustomed European shores and has managed to be the truest reflection for every idea that AEGEE stands for... Indeed, a Results Brochure tracing the three years of achievement will be published in 2007.

Alexianne Galea - strongly committed to the discourse of active youth citizenship and firmly believing that success remains that ladder which cannot be climbed with your hands in your pocket, she has been managing and leading the Youth & Globalisation project ever since its inception in 2003. She has also been at the lead of the Juridical Commission of AEGEE-Europe for two years and for this 2007, she is the Chairperson of the association.





THE EUROISLAM PROJECT AND THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS

by Gülece Şenel

**Red, yellow and green: the colors of the traffic lights...
Intolerance, readiness and activeness: the feelings of a driver...**

Stop, prepare and go: the (re)actions...

And their combination: stop at the intolerant red, prepare yourself at the ready yellow and go at the active green...

Actually, traffic lights are not only in the streets, but also at home, at work etc. We are faced with red, yellow and green almost in every minute of our lives because there are two traffic lights that we carry in ourselves everywhere: one located in our brain and the other in our hearts. According to the colors of the lights, we (re)act: stop, get ready or go. For instance, when we meet a new culture, the lights are red, we create prejudices and stop. As soon as we start to discover that it is not so different from ours, yellow appears and we get ready to bring our armors down. Then, all of a sudden, we find out that there is actually no reason to stand apart, we are different but at the same time we have similarities and life is beautiful with the existence of "the other". The other: culture, nation or religion. Certainly, it is the turn of the green...

After 9/11 attacks in New York, the distinction between Christianity and Islam became more obvious and both sides were emitting red lights to the other. Hence, they were stopping and during this period, intolerance rose and the gap between them enlarged.

In 2003, some courageous people within AEGEE put yellow on and got rid of their armors. Then, green took the floor and persons like Hakan Gümüş and Leila Koocheky initiated the Euro-Islam project, whose goals were to promote an inter-religious dialogue especially between Islam and Christianity and to create open and tolerant societies by bringing youngsters from different religious backgrounds together. In accordance with these goals, the Euro-Islam project team, consisted of ten young people from different cultures, organized events in Münster (May 2003), Forli-Italy (March 2005), Iasi-Romania (April 2005), Ankara (Eye Contact, Oct.2005) and Bucharest (Oct. 2005). Through these, young people met each other, learn about each other, acquainted themselves with Islam and realized that Muslims are not actually "traditionalists" or "terrorists". As the lights passed from red to yellow, they abolished their prejudices. Then, it was the turn of the green and

the participants got into action. They discussed topics like Islam in Europe, human rights, discrimination, terrorism and tried to develop strategies to enable a successful integration of European Muslims.

"We should not conceive Muslim culture as an intruder in the European Society but as a part of it. The Euro-Islam project realized this kind of tolerance in a practical way. During the event, I developed a new attitude towards Islam and deepened my understanding of this religion," said Helena Marusko, a participant from Slovenia. Certainly, this project made a big change in many lives, especially the ones involved in it.

As Judith Zijlstra stated "It is indispensable to keep the dialogue alive and to actively confront our own neighbors with all the questions and doubts we have, either they live in the house or in the country next to us." And now, AEGEE-Istanbul, with the dream of applying the theory of Euro-Islam in the real life, wants to show to European and Muslim communities that they have the capacity to create mutual understanding. Under the umbrella of the Euro-Islam project, they work on "Questioning Identities in Euro-Islam" conference, which will include lectures, debates, workshops, simulations and tours. By this method, they aim at questioning the different interpretations in Islam and the reflection of Muslim customs to the cultures they co-exist with.

There is no doubt that this upcoming event will develop the Euro-Islam project and make steps forward for a better inter-religious dialogue.

Now, it is time to stop our intolerance towards others, prepare ourselves by opening the curtains and let the sunshine in. The peaceful green will show up soon. Then, it is the turn of action.

And remember, the sun rises from the East...

Gülece Şenel

Special thanks to Judith Zijlstra, Zeynep Gülşen and Burcu Becermen





CAUCASUS PROJECT – TIME FOR NEW CHALLENGES

by Karolina Wysocka

Since its creation, AEGEE has been a window onto Europe, providing opportunities for cross-border cooperation among young people. We have always reached areas that others have neglected, and we are pioneers of European integration for countries in transition. Nowadays AEGEE is one of the first NGOs developing a network in the Caucasus.

The Caucasus Project started in January 2005 with the aim of fostering cooperation and cultural exchange between young people from Georgia and Azerbaijan as well as other parts of Europe. We focused on network development, which is a big challenge in the Caucasus because of the geographical distances, financial barriers and political difficulties involved, all of which limit the opportunities for youth cooperation. The Caucasus Project helped to ensure the communication flow with the European Level of AEGEE, it stimulated the exchange of experience and partnership with locals from other parts of Europe, it provided training for multipliers (job shadowing), and it helped in acquiring grants for projects. AEGEE members proved to be determined to overcome all obstacles in order to share their European cultural heritage and to develop civil society.

Looking back over the past two years, I feel proud of AEGEE-Tbilisi and AEGEE-Baku for their enthusiasm, dedication and ambition. In 2006 AEGEE-Tbilisi organised three big international projects: the Euroforum Caucasus; the 'Caucasian Mystery' Summer University; and a training course entitled 'European Citizenship in Youth Work'. They also hosted an Estonian volunteer within the framework of the European Voluntary Service. They played an active role in the National Council of Youth Organisations of Georgia as well as in the Eastern European Youth Cooperation.

AEGEE-Baku is a younger brother of AEGEE-Tbilisi that has now grown up and has its own ambitious plans. You are already invited to the Novruz Festival in March 2008. This festival is a traditional spring welcome, which has its origins in the time of ancient Babylon and is still a lively part of Azerbaijani culture.

The current edition of the Caucasus Project was rounded off with the Study Visit to Tbilisi and Baku (CST). This provided

not only an overview on new partnerships and on youth policies in the two countries, but also a collection of fantastic photographs which can be exhibited by every local. Now it is time to gather together a new project team and to take up new challenges, such as developing the network in Armenia, organising new thematic projects in various forms, and of course: more exchanges and job shadowing!

Karolina Wysocka
Caucasus Project Manager

Training Multipliers – Job Shadowing Visits

Exchanging good practices, developing skills, sharing knowledge and building partnerships: these are the aims of job shadowing visits. And the experience of AEGEE shows that these visits can be very effective!

Job shadowing involves a 1-3 week visit to a partner organisation in another country. The visitor gets an insight into the work of the host NGO. The NGO offers a new perspective and new ideas and experiences, which the visitor can put into practice after returning home. However, job shadowing is not only about learning how to work more effectively, it is also about opening your eyes to new ideas, sharing knowledge, building up partnerships, and last but not least, breaking stereotypes – in order to work together for a better Europe!

Job shadowing in AEGEE has in particular created opportunities for volunteers from the Caucasus to experience how voluntary work is carried out in stable democratic societies. The first such opportunity was for Tamuna from Tbilisi, who visited the Head Office of AEGEE-Europe in Brussels. Next, AEGEE-Athina and AEGEE-Mainz/Wiesbaden acted as hosts, and again the outcomes were fruitful. The participants play leading roles in their communities, organising Summer Universities, exchanges and many local projects. Following this great example, other AEGEE locals, for example Gdansk, Passau and Izmir, are preparing to become hosts for new job shadowing visitors.

It is impressive how much inspiration for future activities can be developed during a 3-week visit, and hopefully this way of sharing experience will become more and more popular





20 YEARS OF THE SU PROJECT AND IT JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER AND BETTER

by Veronika Žagar

Every year, around 5000 people decide that they want more than just a summer holiday... they want an amazing experience amongst a mixture of cultures, a chance to discover something more, a life-changing adventure. For the past 20 years, the Summer University Project has been making this dream a reality – and it has been a huge success. Everyone who has had a taste of a Summer University in one way or another understands exactly why this project is the biggest, most famous and most popular AEGEE project today.

Today, the Summer University Project involves over 150 locals in 30 European countries. But what does a Summer University actually involve? It is usually a two-week event organised by an AEGEE local, bringing together between 20 and 50 young people from all over Europe. There are many different activities that can be enjoyed during a Summer University, ranging from academic activities such as foreign language classes and technical courses to multicultural activities. But the best part of it is young people spending time together, learning from each other and proving over and over again that stereotypes are a thing of the past. Each year, around 90 Summer Universities are organised all over Europe, with around 5000 people from more than 40 European countries applying.

Over the past 20 years, the project has involved about 50 000 people, more than 260 cities and more than 40 countries, making it the biggest volunteer-based mobility project in Europe. But how did it all start?

The beginning...

In 1988, the Summer University Project was born. As a taster, 10 language courses with 320 places were organised. Barcelona, Madrid, Sevilla, Heidelberg, Kiel, Milan, Amsterdam, Orléans, Paris and Toulouse are the places where the success story began. Just one year later, there were already 16 courses on offer, and in 1992 the number of Summer Universities exceeded 50 for the first time: no fewer than 62 Summer Universities were organised! By the time AEGEE celebrated its 10th anniversary in 1995, the number of courses on offer had climbed to 84. The project is unstoppable – even now, it's still getting bigger and better.

Where are we now?

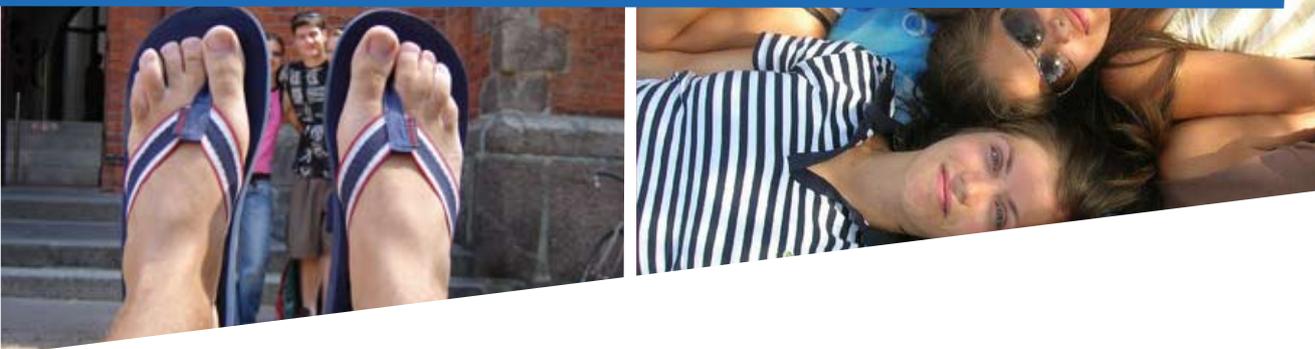
Today, the Summer University Project is AEGEE's biggest project. And why do we love it so much? Simply because it brings us together: a group of approximately 30 strangers needs only a few days to become one big family... spending the next two weeks together, full of fun, laughter, parties, new experiences, and tears when it's all over. Sleepless nights, crazy days and an unforgettable atmosphere are what makes a Summer University such an unforgettable experience. And there's so much more to it than that: getting to know different cultures, learning to accept and respect our differences – since that is exactly what makes us all unique – and learning to overcome stereotypes is what makes the Summer University Project one of the best ways of promoting European integration and making a borderless Europe more than just a nice idea.

But this is only just the beginning...

The Summer University Project has now reached its 20th birthday, and it is definitely not stopping here: the goal is to make the project even bigger and better, and to highlight the things that make it unique. Summer Universities have always been much more than just a holiday, and this will become even more obvious in the future, as the plan is to make Summer Universities even more content-based than they are already, with lectures and classes on a variety of topics such as language courses, arts, photography, etc. This would be done in cooperation with different AEGEE bodies and project teams, to create a truly AEGEEan atmosphere and to give members an opportunity to become more familiar with what goes on in AEGEE.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

AEGEE-Oviedo managed to enrol **2000** members officially in 1990s and got the title of most crowded AEGEE Antenna ever in AEGEE History



The meaning behind it

From the very beginning, the Summer University Project has always been considered so much more than just a cheap holiday somewhere abroad. Of course, it gives students a chance to explore a new country and have a great summer, but it offers them so much more as well. Apart from being an opportunity to meet new friends and learn something useful (whether it is a new language, the history of the country or photographic skills), it is the best platform from which to give participants a true taste of cultural exchange and European integration; these are also very important fields of action that AEGEE is working on. Even people who just go to a Summer University to have a great time on the beach are in for a surprise: they will return home with a lot more than just a tan and nice memories!

All Summer Universities are special in their own way, but we can't go without mentioning the Volunteering Summer University that is being organised for the fourth time this year by AEGEE-Zaragoza. Every year, enthusiastic participants from all over Europe gather together to organise an unforgettable summer for people from small villages in that area. Definitely a very special way to spend your summer!

Mobility and disability hand in hand

Just like all other AEGEE events and activities, the Summer University Project has always been open to disabled participants. Each year, there are more and more Summer Universities that are also able to accept participants with various disabilities. Though this may not always be possible, due to local circumstances, the nature of the activities planned, or whatever other reason, there are still locals that make the effort. This year, the following locals are organising Summer Universities accessible for participants with disabilities: AEGEE-Barcelona, AEGEE-Tarragona, AEGEE-Castelló, AEGEE-Karlsruhe, AEGEE-Teroli, AEGEE-Cluj-Napoca, AEGEE-Sibiu, AEGEE-Salerno, AEGEE-Timişoara, AEGEE-Arad, AEGEE-Helsinki, AEGEE-Turku/Åbo, AEGEE-Tampere, AEGEE-Riga, AEGEE-Skopje, AEGEE-Nowy Sacz, AEGEE-Delft, AEGEE-Budapest and AEGEE-Szeged.

The birthday party :)

Of course, nobody, not even the Summer University Project, can turn 20 and not throw a birthday party, right? Around 200 people will be celebrating the 20th birthday of their favourite project in Istanbul. "20 years Summer University Project", organised by AEGEE-Istanbul and the Summer University Coordination Team, will be a mixture of serious content and a crazy birthday party. Topics discussed will include the past, present and future of the Summer University Project, as well as the most important field that the Summer University Project is working on: mobility. But let's not forget the celebration: this year, from 5th to 7th November, Istanbul will be the place to be for all fans of the Summer University Project.

Veronika Žagar, born in 1984, discovered AEGEE in spring 2006. One year and many events later, she became a board member of AEGEE-Ljubljana, where she is currently responsible for PR. Given her passion for writing, working in the Key to Europe team has been her best experience in AEGEE so far.





Sebastiano Perale, AEGEE-Venezia:

"The Summer University Project is one that I still need to experience fully, but it's great. It is probably the best kind of event that AEGEE organises, because people come together from very different parts of Europe, and most of the time they're not as into AEGEE, so each time there's a different mix of exciting people! I think it's an unforgettable experience, and fun is 100% guaranteed!!!"

Maria on the 2006 SU "High Spirits in the Low Countries", organised by AEGEE-Groningen



Maria Morozova, AEGEE-Kyiv:

"On my Summer University in Groningen, we got to know the Dutch way of life and culture from the inside. Actually, we discovered for ourselves many aspects of the city of Groningen, running around on the city tour quest, visiting every possible pub and club in the evening, playing games in the pleasant countryside, and doing that crazy walking on the seabed (at low tide). Of course, we also had some relaxing time at a lake, between CYCLING tours (yes, the Dutch are crazy about them!), canoeing, sailing... And we managed to spend the early hours of the morning learning some new things in English... What I really like about SUs is their multiculturalism and intercultural communication.

"Around 30 participants took part in the 2006 SU "High Spirits in the Low Countries". We learnt a lot from each other, and we continue to keep the SU spirit going through virtual meetings on MSN as well as "real-life" reunions. Somewhere in Europe..."

Juha as Santa Claus on the 2006 SU "Finland TSU: SUOMI – The Hottest Place in Europe", organised by AEGEE-Helsinki and AEGEE-Turku/Åbo



Juha Kännö, AEGEE-Helsinki:

"My AEGEE story started in the usual way: I joined AEGEE in spring 2006 because I wanted to go abroad on a Summer University. I was accepted, but then I couldn't travel after all because of my job. Instead, the energetic people from AEGEE-Helsinki asked me to join the organising team of their own Summer University. I thought "why not?", and soon found myself busy with preparations.

"For me the Finland TSU was a memorable experience. It didn't matter that the event took place in my own country – the atmosphere was truly European. The organisers and participants were really cheerful people. I liked the spirit and became involved with more and more activities in my antenna. And yes, now I have also travelled to AEGEE events abroad! As for the Summer University, everyone remembers me as Santa Claus ("Joulupukki"), who paid a visit to the European Night party."

Miha enjoying his ice cream on the 2006 SU "Are you ready to get higher?", organised by AEGEE-Eskisehir



Miha Novak, AEGEE-Ljubljana:

"We travelled to the land of the scorching sun, a proud, relaxed nation – Turkey. Looking back now, I must admit that I don't remember the exact theme or title of our Summer University. However, I'm always filled with a happy feeling when I think of it. Two weeks of hanging out in a distant country with a group of 30 people is not something you can forget easily, and you can be sure that you'll develop close ties with at least one of them!"

Fleur in the spirit of Ukraine on the 2006 TSU "Ukrain(e)bow", organised by AEGEE-Kyiv and AEGEE-Uzhgorod



Fleur Stadhouders, AEGEE-Groningen:

"The greatest thing about the TSU "Ukrain(e)bow" was that we travelled more than 2000km in stinky trains with no oxygen, and still everyone was happy and having so much fun. In these two weeks we saw so much of this huge country and we made so many impressions, it was really intense! When I got back home I had to sleep for three days, though during the SU I almost forgot to sleep at all. It really was the best time of my life!!!"

Dave, really enjoying the 2006 SU "Blow your mind", organised by AEGEE-Enschede



David Meijer, AEGEE-Enschede:

"In February 2006, when I had only been a member of AEGEE for a few months, I joined the AEGEE-Enschede SU organising team. Organising the SU was pretty hard work for our inexperienced committee, and sometimes I was so fed up with it that I asked myself "Why am I doing this again? ". But when the SU finally started on 9th July it all became clear! It was terrific to have 25 participants from all over Europe in my local, to lead them around and play fun team-building games while everybody was still shy, and then to have a great party in the evening. And that was only the first day! The other 13 days were just as good. I don't think I've ever been as tired as I was on the last day, but at the same time I don't think I've ever had such a beautiful and fun-filled two weeks! Now, less than a year later, I have visited about 10 of the participants in different parts of Europe. We have truly become good friends!"

PLATFORMS OF UNDERSTANDING -WORKING GROUPS



September 2004, Bucharest - Romania, Bulgaria and the EU conference



WGS - HOW DID IT START?

by Radu Racareanu

The working groups of AEGEE came to life in a similar way as AEGEE did: the necessity to create a European platform where young Europeans would meet and take action on specific issues, linked in some way or another to the main aim of AEGEE: European Integration.

This is how in 1988, only 3 years after AEGEE had started, the first Working Group of AEGEE, the East-West Working group was created as a main platform to discuss and develop continuous actions in these matters.

1990 saw the foundation of the second Working Group of AEGEE – the Environmental Working Group (EnvWG) subsequently with growing concerns of the members in this area. Both groups were extremely active organising big congresses and regular activities: Environmental Week for the EnvWG and continuous contact with university cities in Eastern Europe, as well as the foundation of new antennae in the region.

Success leads to success. New Working Groups soon followed: the Erasmus Team which became the Erasmus Working Group in 1990 working for the promotion of the Erasmus programme, Europe of the Regions Working Group concerned with the regional co-operation within Europe, North-South Working Group studying the social inequalities from the North and South of the Mapamond in 1991. Tempus Working Group (also coming from the Tempus Team) was promoting the Tempus programme from 1991 and following the merger with the Erasmus WG, the Education Working Group appeared in October 1994. Health Care Working Group and Cultural Working Group were also set up of this early period.

Of all these Working Groups started in the early days, only few still exist: Education Working Group, Culture Working Group and Human Rights Working Group (1994). Some of the others, like the East-West Working Group or the latter Voyage Working Group found that their initial reason for foundation is not a sensitive issue as it was in the beginning and were dissolved. Some others proved to have a different focus than the goals of AEGEE.

New Working Groups were however founded, many of them with a supportive role of the activity of AEGEE: the Public Relations Working Group (1995), the Information Technologies Working Group (in 2000 originating in the the E-mail User Group), Visa Freedom Fighters, AEGEE-Academy - the Human Resources Working Group (1999) and the BoBiGoSa Working

Group aimed at introducing different reforms in AEGEE. The International Politics Working Group was founded in 1997 and dealt from its beginning with the analysis of all kinds of aspects of Politics in the world, while the Dance Working Group (2001) focuses on the dance traditions in Europe.

“From the very beginning the Working Groups were platforms for reflection and a place to debate important topics, allow us to be able to cover our fields of action, provide us with new project ideas and support AEGEE projects with their thematic input” says Laure Onidi, Projects Director of AEGEE-Europe.

In a student organisation with a high turnover of members and many project based on activities, Working Groups have a strong role in providing AEGEE with a good continuity in its activities and also offer the possibilities for involvement at the European level. However, working constantly over the internet, sometimes without actually knowing your team-mates personally and few possibilities to meet them is not a very efficient working environment. This is the occasion when the AEGEE spirit shows itself. In the end, the active working group members will have the occasion that they have enjoyed the work in a very diverse international team, exchanging ideas and then bringing them to life, improving their intercultural communication skills and realising that you can work as closely to somebody that lives thousands of kilometers away, as to the ones living in the same city.

In the words of Anna Gabriel, former Speaker of the Cultural Working Group and Human Resources Director of AEGEE-Europe: “working together with people from many different countries and backgrounds on a long distance basis is a huge challenge that has definitely prepared me very well for my current task, Human Resources Director of AEGEE Europe”



WORKING GROUPS OF TODAY

by Gokhan Bozkurt

The Working Groups are the essential bodies for AEGEE's work. They are international committees that are open to any AEGEE member who wants to work in a particular subject. Each Working Group covers a certain field so that all AEGEE members can find a suitable place for their own interest.

Around 2000 AEGEE members are either a member of a Working Group or involve in an activity of a WG. This shows us that 10% of all AEGEE members somehow get active in a Working Group.

AEGEE have 10 Working Groups divided into three categories. These are AEGEE Working Groups, Supporting Working Groups, Thematic Working Groups.

AEGEE Working Groups:

AEGEE Working Groups have the same status as an Antenna. They must be registered as associations, have their own statutes, and have delegates with voting rights at the Agora.

AEGEE Working Groups are:

AEGEE-Academy has always been one of the most popular and the most successful WGs of AEGEE. The main aim the Academy is to enable and sustain a long-term successful internal education co-operation with the Human Resources Director of AEGEE-Europe. This co-operation consists of developing human resources strategies, organizing internal education and training courses on various subjects, providing Human Resources for AEGEE projects and committees. The members of the Academy are experienced and committed members. Even though the WG is open to any AEGEE member, they have a membership criteria to keep the good and effective work up. Since Academy members are also AEGEE Trainers, the Members are required to have proven organizational skills and experience on various fields of AEGEE. The Examples of such Academy events are Local Training Courses, European School 1 and 2, Public Relations European School, Fund Raising European School, IT European School and Training for Trainers.

AEGEE-Culture Working Group (CWG) works to enhance the knowledge, understanding and respect of the wide variety of cultures in Europe. The aim of CWG is to improve mutual understanding between young people from all over Europe, promote dialogue, respect and tolerance between the different cultures.

Membership of the WG is open to all AEGEE members. The only requested thing is to fill a form and send a motivation letter to the board. CWG has also very strong cooperation with external partners outside of AEGEE. They have cooperation with Sibiu 2007 European Capital of Culture Association, Luxembourg 2007 European Capital of Culture Association, Conference Generale de la Jeunesse - Luxembourg and Polish Youth Council. As a result of those external cooperations, CWG is organising an international event named "Get Up, Stand Up! Volunteering in Europe!" between the 15th and 23rd of May 2007 in Luxembourg. They also closely work with Find Europe Coordination Team of AEGEE.

Since it directly represents one of the main pillars of AEGEE, **AEGEE-Education Working Group (EWG)** is one of the most important working groups of AEGEE. The founder of AEGEE, Frank Biancheri, also underlines the importance of EWG by defining the duty of AEGEE: "The duty of AEGEE-Europe: Being at the core of every debate concerning European Higher Education."

The main aims of the Education WG are to strive for a European higher Education area by promoting and evaluating European education programs such as Erasmus and to gather and spread information on other educational and Exchange programs. The revival activity that started 2 years ago has been giving its fruits nowadays. Today EWG has 55 official members. The membership of the WG is open to everybody who is interested in Education WG. The working group just organized Bologna Process Multiplier Training in February 2007 in Münster. It gathered many young Europeans to discuss and learn more about European Higher Education System. EWG also have a close contact with external partners such as ESIB, BEST and other European Students' Associations.



AEGEE-Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) is also an important WG for AEGEE members as it covers one of the most delicate subjects of today's World. The main aim of the WG is to contribute "Human Rights" issues. An other aim of the WG is to create an international environment for young people who are interested in Human Rights issues. The WG and its members are interested in issues such as immigration, racism, disability. HRWG organizes campaigns, action weeks, workshops infodesk and one conference per year on Human Rights and related fields. The Working group lastly organized a training course named All Rights for All in Izmir in the end of 2006.

AEGEE-International Politics Working Group (IPWG) is one of the most structured and the most successful WGs in terms of the events that are organized by the WG. IPWG is for AEGEE members who are interested in international relations and politics. IPWG provide a place for students and other young adults to get in contact with other students from all over Europe sharing the interest in international politics, and debate their opinions.

IPWG officially have 120 active members. The membership is open to anyone but the board expects a clear motivation and willingness to work actively in the WG from the members. Currently they are working hard for the organisation of Mediation Training "Striving for Diversity - Fighting Intolerance" which will take place in April 2007 in Poland. IPWG currently is conducting "Discussion on Europe Citizenship" by organizing workshops on statutory events, and by discussions on mailing lists.

Supportive Working Groups:

Supportive Working Groups help to keep the AEGEE network going. They are active on different fields such as internal education, fund raising, public relations. As you can understand from the name, their task is to support the Network whenever it is needed. They do not have voting rights at the Agora. But they can have representatives to Agoras. Supporting Working Groups are:

BoBiGoSa Working Group is a little bit different from all Working Groups. It was founded as a supporting working group. The aim of the WG is to serve and protect the transparency in all activities and bodies of AEGEE. The activities of the WG is to criticize and even sometimes to make irony if something is not transparent or right in the Network. The membership of the WG is open to experienced AEGEE members.

Information Technology WG (ITWG) is a real support for all AEGEE Network. ITWG is the group of people taking care of the whole IT within AEGEE-Europe. The work of ITWG includes updating and maintaining the main AEGEE websites ,

assuring a proper communication inside AEGEE Network by maintaining and managing the mailing lists. AEGEE servers are also updated and maintained by ITWG. ITWG also regularly visits Head Office in Brussels and maintain the computers in the head office. ITWG organizes internal education in the field of IT. ITWG has around 150 members and It is open to all AEGEE members who want to contribute to the work of ITWG. No IT knowledge is required for membership. Apart from its regular activities, ITWG currently works on Online Membership System for AEGEE.

Public Relations Working Group (PRWG) is surely one of the most active working groups in AEGEE. They are a group of people who are "Seriously Creative". It is a meeting place for all AEGEE members who have interest and knowledge on PR. As a Supporting Working Group, its aim is to assist the Comité Directeur and all other AEGEE Bodies in specific PR-Related tasks. PRWG also maintains and try to improve the public relation activities in AEGEE network. PRWG regularly organises Public Relations European Schools and take care of AEGEE publications such as New Bulletin and WG Booklets. PRWG lastly organized Public Relation European School in Pecs in February 2007 and it attracted many young PR activists from all over Europe.

Visa Freedom Fighter Working Group (VFF WG) is the smallest WG of AEGEE. It gives information about all issues related with Visa and helps when someone has problems with getting Visa or inviting people. They publish online a visa booklet and organize workshops at Agoras.

Thematic Working Groups:

Thematic Working Groups deal with specific topics and support the AEGEE projects. They do not have voting rights at the Agora but they can send representatives to Agoras. The only Thematic WG of AEGEE is Dance Working Group (DWG) that aims to motivate and animate AEGEE Network; AEGEE locals as well as its members to dance; to organise dance events. Above all DWG's aim is to organize dance events within AEGEE. DWG members believe that Diversity is an integral part of unity. We have different cultures in Europe but we also have so much in common. And Dance is the best way to explore new cultures, to show ours. There shouldn't be any doubt about that



IPWG: THE POLITICAL FACE OF AEGEE

Bart de Haas

In 2007 the IPWG, the International Politics Working Group, celebrates its 10th anniversary. This is a great opportunity to revise the past, the present and the future, and an opportunity to ask Sergio Caredda, one of the first creators, Frank Burgdörfer, who created the working group, Olivier Genkin, the IPWG-speaker in its golden times, and Urszula Kiwara, who is organizing this year's 'IPWG goes Den Haag', what they perceive as the most important characteristics of this Working Group.

Officially, according to the statutes of the IPWG, the purpose of the working group is "promoting the study and the analysis of international relationships, supranational institutions and organisations, and diplomatic relationships." Or, in the words of Olivier Genkin: "The main mission of the IPWG is to promote interest among young people for topics dealing with international relations and politics." And it works. There are always discussions on the mailing lists and at each of AEGEE's statutory events their workshops attract many students. Besides these workshops the working group also organizes some high-profile seminars and conferences each year, like 'IPWG goes Den Haag'.

Hot topics

Looking at all this today, you can hardly imagine that once there was a day when there wasn't such thing as an IPWG. So, how did it all begin? The idea for such a working group first came up in the Italian local AEGEE-Gorizia. Sergio Caredda was one of the initiators. "The idea came up for several reasons," he remembers. "First of all we were all students at the International Politics Faculty there, a specific institution, with students coming from all over Italy and with a very international mindset. So being active in AEGEE at an international level gave me the opportunity to find out what an excellent network of possibilities was hidden behind AEGEE members."

At that time there were already many hot topics circulating, including several topics about international politics. Caredda: "One of the hottest topics was about European integration. And then we thought: how can we find a way to exploit the interest towards these topics in a more 'scientific' way? Our solution was by giving AEGEE the chance to have a body which could elaborate on several of these topics which the association had to confront itself with."

However, according to Caredda it wasn't easy at all to make this idea a reality. "Initially we established a local association in Gorizia, and then we introduced it to the network. But when I started my adventure in the CD, I couldn't continue my engagement with the local activities. Some of the other 'found-

ing members' had to deal with the same kind of problems, for example when being abroad with their Erasmus scholarships. Fortunately we found in Frank a very engaged person, who was able to really shape the IPWG to what it is today."

One step beyond

That 'very engaged person' was Frank Burgdörfer. He noticed that the key had to be in more than just the low entry barrier. "That's the great thing about AEGEE: everybody is welcome and most people who get in contact with it feel attracted. You can easily contribute at your own local, you can easily develop a personal network all over Europe, and you can easily get some practical experience in being part of a democratic European body. All this is important, great, and somehow even unique, but from the very beginning I was deeply convinced that AEGEE must go even one step beyond."

Going one step beyond, it may sound easy, but it wasn't. At that time there wasn't anything at all within AEGEE which made it possible that people from all over the network could work together on specific fields of action. Burgdörfer: "It definitely needed structures in order to make best use of the networks potential in a continual way. When we wanted to improve its capacities to run substantial European projects, and to attract and keep the kind of members who are interested in intensive and inspiring work, we just needed working groups. And the IPWG was just the one I was interested in."

The big project called Europe

Whenever he meets some friends from 'the old days' he's still talking often about the beginning. "At my first statutory event, at the PM in Budapest (in 1997), I got convinced to become speaker of something called IPWG. But at that time it actually consisted of nothing more than statues and some first ideas. I then needed quite some time to realise the situation before I could start building it up in a realistic way..."

But finally he did. "I see AEGEE as a stage, prepared by previous generations, but to be used and filled with life and developed further by the current members. IPWG is a corner of this stage, and if its members understand and play their role well. They can contribute a lot to the success of the whole adventure. They can really make a difference by contributing to the big project called Europe."



Every single day for AEGEE

Since its foundation in 1997, IPWG has become a strong pillar within AEGEE. One of the persons who pulled the working group towards its 'golden times' is Olivier Genkin. In 2000, after having gathered enough experience on the local level, he was looking for new challenges within the association. "That's why I decided to join the European level. Just like Frank the working group that seemed to be the most interesting one to me was the one dealing with international politics. At the Agora in Udine I decided to candidate for the board and so I got elected as PR responsible."

There he quickly realised that project management is one of his biggest strenghts. "I noticed that I really liked organizing big events with and for others, and that I can also motivate other people to join 'my' projects. And once the wheel is turning, you can always do more and more, sometimes investing six hours or more on every single day for AEGEE!" But his reward was the satisfaction afterwards, because in this way he gave many people the possibility to organize or participate in serious and high-profile events.

Genkin: "As an example, I will never forget the PIE-project, the project Palestinians-Israelis-Europeans, which we initiated within IPWG in 2002." Later this would become an independent project and finally even an own organization outside of AEGEE, dealing with conflict management in general. "Already at the first PIE-conference in Hamburg, we gathered young people from Israel and the Palestinian Authority, we learned how they are seeing each other, and for some of them it was the first time that they had the chance to exchange their views. It was really moving to see that people can talk with each other in a friendly atmosphere, no matter the political context they were facing at home."

IPWG goes Den Haag

The main projects Olivier was working on when being PR responsible of IPWG, were two events. The first one is called the 'Summit of 28 - Simulation of decision-making in an enlarged European Union with 28 member-states'. "It was the highlight event of the 2001 yearplan project of AEGEE 'Quo vadis, Europe?'" The second one is called 'IPWG goes Den Haag'. Genkin: "This was a trip to the international institutions in The Hague. During my three years as speaker we organized this event on a yearly basis, as my intention was to set standards and thus continuity within the working group."

This year, in May, this event will be held again. It indeed shows the continuity of the working group, that the IPWG is still active. Once again the event will be hosted by the local AEGEE-Leiden. One of the organizers is Leiden board-member Urszula Kiwara. Since she started to contact the institutions, she became very enthusiastic about it: "This year's topic will be the Axes of Evil, as president George W Bush called some dangerous nations. We're planning to visit Europol, the Peace Palace and the AIVD - the Dutch authority on information and security -, but also the Iranian and maybe the American

embassy."

One of the most difficult things is to get some nice and important lecturers, who'd like to discuss these topics with the participants. Kiwara: "This year I managed to get Gijs de Vries to The Hague!" In the last four years he was the European coordinator in the fight against terrorism. "When talking to such important persons, you think they're standing very far from us. But actually they're closer than I thought. I really discovered that they like to share their knowledge and discuss their views with interested students."

Life and career and future

Both Sergio Caredda as Frank Burgdörfer mention that IPWG, or AEGEE in general, has changed their lives. Caredda: "As a matter of fact, what I do today is not at all linked to my studies. But it is a lot linked to the general AEGEE experience I had in Brussels. In this way I really learnt how important personal development is for the success of any organization. The same is true for Europe, by the way, because the European Dream we represent is a long way ahead. As long as it's Vision and Values are still carried around by energizing people, this association will continue to exist. The only problem I see is in both its weakness and strength: AEGEE, just like the European Union, constantly needs to reinvent itself."

Burgdörfer: "Personally I can say that AEGEE has changed my life. Europe always was something abstract, it wasn't a part of my real life yet. My active times have widened my horizon dramatically. I learnt that conflicts, like in the Balkans, do not only take place in the newspapers, on TV or in scientific literature. I also learnt to plan and realise projects. Today this is what I am earning my living with." After the experience with IPWG he founded Citizens of Europe, a network primarily addressing people above their student age who want to contribute to an active civil society.

Unity in diversity

After the EU enlargement in 2004, together with the IPWG Olivier Genkin has been working on AEGEE's Yearplan Project 'EU and Europe'. This project aims at discussions about the identity of European countries, those who joined long time ago and those who recently joined the EU, but as well those countries that remained outside its borders. "The project was both a big challenge and a big success for the IPWG, especially since it has been 100% coordinated by the working group."

Initiated as the outcome of the IPWG conference "Europe's (Torn?) Identity" in Ljubljana in October 2003, which has later been voted as the AEGEE event of the year - and of various workshops at different occasions, the aim of the project was to discuss the relations between the freshly enlarged European Union and its neighboring countries", stresses Olivier Genkin.





With many participants he debated on the geographical, political and cultural definitions of Europe, on the role the EU should play, and on the characterisations of its (new) neighbours.

At this moment the IPWG is the biggest working group in terms of members. Whenever he visits the AEGEE-website, and whenever he finds new projects run by IPWG, Frank Burgdörfer must admit that he's always a bit proud of that. Although he thinks that the amount of active members is more important, also Olivier Genkin surely sees this as a nice indication. "It shows that we managed to interest many AEGEEans for the topics we are dealing with. Because that's our role, to bring people together, make them mobile, cross borders. We should accept cultural differences and reduce prejudice. In this way our association is a living example of the EU's slogan 'unity in diversity'."

It has always been there

The IPWG was born ten years ago. However, according to Olivier it always existed: "If you want, you can also observe that the political face of AEGEE has always been there since 1985,

where the congress EGEE I – which gave birth to AEGEE – already tackled issues such as the future of Europe and many others. The patrons of that event were important politicians, such as Mitterrand or Chirac, and Le Monde as one of the largest French newspapers offered entire pages of promotion. Visibility, though the attention of both the media and the politicians is what the IPWG and AEGEE in general need. We should not be afraid of striving for ambitious and large projects, as together we can really achieve a lot!"

So what are his plans and hopes for the future of IPWG? "My hope and expectation is that it stays an active working group, offering European students a forum for discussion and for organizing serious conferences dealing with important thematic issues. We AEGEEans are active citizens and we should not hesitate to facilitate the building of the opinion(s) of the young Europeans, in order to make their voice heard and, thus, to build the best possible Europe we can get."

IPWG LOOKS AHEAD

by Agata Patecka

2007 is a special year for IPWG. This is our tenth anniversary and we are trying to make it memorable, not only for our working group members but for all of AEGEE. How? Through facing challenges, organising great events, supporting valuable initiatives – "shaping perspectives" as our motto says.

To make things better we started to improve our internal structure. A new HR tool – mentorship – is being introduced. It involves linking new members with more experienced personal mentors, who can motivate and help them. "The aim is to motivate people to become active in IPWG, and to point out that becoming a member of a working group implies being involved actively in the ongoing projects, or initiating new ones", says board member Daniel Soujon. To bring the WG closer to its members, the board also started to organise semiannual meetings. IPWG now meets every spring and autumn – between the Agoras – to improve collaboration on its projects.

Another important point is that IPWG encourages its members to set up local versions of the working group. During Network Meetings, board members inform people about IPWG, present events and plans to gain new members and encourage people to start their own IPWG in their antennae. Local groups are assisted by the European level to create a well developed system that provides a broad platform for discussions.

IPWG doesn't neglect its "headline" events. One of them is this April's "Conflict Management and Mediation Training Seminar" in Zielona Góra. Training is organized in the framework of the Council of Europe campaign "All different – all equal". It aims to bring together young Europeans with different perspectives on certain conflicts. Participants from across the network will be taught conflict resolution and peace keeping skills that will help them to deal with problems in their home environments.

Another event is the next edition of "IPWG goes The Hague", which will take place between May 21st and 26th, thanks to AEGEE-Leiden. Visiting the Peace Palace, EUROPOL and the Clingendael Institute of International Politics, the participants will learn and debate about international justice and security. Following that, our fourth Diplomatic Seminar will be organized from September 3rd to 9th in co-operation with AEGEE-Ankara. Participants will have the chance to learn and practice diplomacy as it is really used, through workshops and negotiation simulations.

We believe that this year will bring a new quality to our whole association. That is what motivates us to start new projects and develop the ongoing ones. Let this 10th anniversary see us growing bigger, better and much louder!



CULTURE WORKING GROUP – 10 YEARS OF HIGHLIGHTING CULTURE IN EUROPE

by Anna Gabriel and Veronica Dumitreacu

“Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit.” This is Jawaharlal Nehru’s view on culture. But if this is only one perception, then what is the definition of culture? Is it at all possible to define something as exceptional and as broad as culture? In an international organisation such as AEGEE, these questions have of course always been a hotly discussed topic.

No wonder, then, that ever since its formation in 1985, AEGEE has been able to count on a huge number of cultural events and people with a keen interest in the issue. Through its events, our association has always been linked to the field of intercultural exchange, but it was only after the first Think Europe conference in Enschede that the idea of having an officially institutionalised group within AEGEE was conceived. Less than half a year later, at the Spring Agora in 1997, the first board of the WG signed the Convention d’Adhésion and officially joined the network, forming part of AEGEE but keeping its own statutes. 1997 thus marked the birth of the CWG, at that time still called the Cultural Working Group. It was created by people who felt the need to exchange their ideas about culture, people who wanted to approach the topic from different angles and perspectives, not only informally or through individual events, but in a coordinated and structured manner.

Like a phoenix ...

Since its foundation, the WG has had its ups and downs. In some years the CWG was very active, with a couple of events per year, in others it almost disappeared from the AEGEE map. These processes are natural. Time passes, things come and go, older members leave and new ones take over, bringing new ideas and new ways of realising them. The CWG was like a phoenix, one day almost dying and then the next moment reborn from the ashes, as fresh and young as ever.

Only half a year after its foundation, in December 1997, the CWG celebrated its first big event. The conference “Great European cultures, past and present” took place in Thessaloniki and brought together members from the whole network, allowing them to experience one of our continent’s oldest cultures.

Within the next two years, more and more activities were planned. The launch of the homepage and the first newslet-

ter were both new and exciting developments back then. Music festivals and other events followed, focusing mainly on the performing arts. Soon, other WGs and project teams were also involved in the cultural activities of the CWG, for example the Multilingual WG, a predecessor of the European Day of Languages. But the CWG faced its first real big challenge after the Agora in Barcelona, where it was decided that the Yearplan Topic for 2000 would be “Cultural aspects in the new millennium”. It became the task of the CWG, among others, to coordinate the events that were to take place within this framework.

After these first few years of constant growth and activity, the enthusiasm and energy of the working group decreased. Remarkable historical and political developments came onto the European agenda, shifting the focus of interest in other directions. Although our organisation never lost sight of the topic of culture, it was no longer the priority that it had been in the first few years of the second decade of AEGEE.

In October 2004, an attempt was made to revive the Culture WG. A new team, consisting partly of new WG members, partly of experienced members, decided to take the fate of the WG into their own hands and raise the network’s awareness again of the topic of culture. As well as supporting different project teams and antennae in their efforts to organise cultural events by offering its knowledge and resources, the WG also took over the organisation of activities itself. The flagship events of that time were undoubtedly the Performing Arts Summer School (PASS) in Gdansk and “LiteratureLive!” in Berlin, a seminar bringing together literature enthusiasts from all over Europe within the framework of the Internationales Literaturfestival Berlin.

Anna Gabriel has been a board member of AEGEE-Heidelberg and Speaker of the Culture Working Group for several years. Currently she is working as Human Resources Director and Vice-President in the Headquarters of AEGEE-Europe.





Although there had always been workshops and lectures about intercultural dialogue at statutory and internal education events, at that time the CWG focused mainly on the area of cultural expression. Nevertheless, with the election of a completely new board in 2006 came a shift of priorities. The topic of intercultural communication and awareness became increasingly important, but at the same time literature, performing arts and music also received their place on the cultural agenda. Not only quality but also quantity became important again, bringing back to the WG what it had partly neglected in previous years – **diversity**. Alongside this, there has also been an attempt to open up the WG to external partners, which will enable the CWG to be part of well-known European projects and to work together with professionals in the field of culture. The success of these approaches can be best appreciated by looking at several events, for example:

- **the Castello di Duino – Poetry Competition, taking place in March in collaboration with AEGEE-Trieste and external partners under the patronage of the Prince of Duino, Carlo Alessandro della Torre e Tasso**

- **the Cool-Meeting, a contact-making event in April 2007, in partnership with Contact Luxembourg, one of the organisations promoting the Cultural Capital programme of 2007**

- **the Intercultural Training Course in collaboration with the NGO Young SIETAR as well as with other AEGEE bodies**

- **the youth seminar “Get Up – Stand Up!”, organised in Luxembourg with three partners – the Polish Youth Council, Conférence Générale de la Jeunesse Luxembourgeoise and Sibiu 2007 European Capital of Culture.**

Challenges for the present ... and the future

The priority thus far has been to bring an external perspective to the activities of the WG and to involve more and more relevant partners from the cultural field. This has already been at least partially implemented, although the process is still ongoing. But the plans for the future also follow another direction – internal expansion. It is obvious that a working group does not only consist of a board but of many members behind it. Only if it has active, interested and well-informed members is it able to carry out quality events and to take

a stand in society. One of the ways to achieve this is the establishment of local Culture Working Groups. With different antennae all over the network joining forces, this will lead to enrichment, more variety, more insights and points of view, more traditions, more starting points for discussions. “Variatio delectat!”, says a Latin proverb, “variation gives pleasure”. A focal point for the CWG next year will therefore be how to achieve this enrichment.

And in the long term? What else is planned for the future, let’s say for 2017? That will be known when the time comes. But one thing is for sure: there will be ups and downs, just like in all previous years, with new agenda points coming up and old ones being refreshed. The CWG will always be a dynamic working group, with everything that this implies. And this is a reason to celebrate. So: Happy birthday, CWG!

Veronica Dumitrescu - her AEGEE life started when she was 20 with organising the Summer University in 2004 in Sibiu. She continued as PR Responsible and President of AEGEE-Sibiu. Now, in her „professional“ life she is Speaker of CWG and PR Responsible of CST: Destination Europe, putting 100% of her energy in it. She is also the mother of a new born baby - AEGEE Luxembourg.



THE PEOPLE - OUR MAIN STRENGTH



October 2005, Lviv-Freiburg Youth Exchange



LIFE IN BRUSSELS

by Valentina Morselli

Brussels, the heart of Europe, location of the European Commission and the European Council as well as home to the European parliamentarians, is also home to the Comité Directeur (commonly abbreviated in our association to CD), the European Board of AEGEE. We all know what the CD is, but what we often don't know is just how the lives of the CD members change the very moment they get elected. I had the opportunity to work as an assistant with the Comité Directeur from Agora Warszawa to Agora Napoli (which in non-"AEGEE-time" means from May to November 2006). I helped every CD member in their tasks, in particular with administration and external representation, and I would like to share with you the lives of the CD members.

CD members are elected at the Agora (our bi-annual general assembly) by the representatives of our antennae and are therefore accountable to the association for their achievements and their failures. Each one of them receives a legacy from their predecessors, who gave a structure to their work and determined priorities and objectives. To this structure, the newly elected members add their own skills, setting new priorities according to the needs of the association and the wider world. This is an extremely stressful process, requiring members to be able to quickly adapt their ways of thinking to new situations. Moreover, every CD member has to develop in an environment that is strongly affected by the dynamics of the CD as a group of people from different cultural backgrounds and with strong personalities.

What I admire in the people of the CD I worked with is their complete devotion to our association and its values: they breathe AEGEE air, sleep in AEGEE beds and often their mood depends on the fluctuations of the association in the same way that the well-being of a shareholder depends on the fluctuations of the stock exchange. Managing an organisation as diverse and versatile as ours brings with it many difficulties. The rules that govern our association are not always clear, or they may have been interpreted in a different way when they were introduced, and there is always something unforeseen happening. AEGEE has always been a very dynamic organisation, but its continuous institutional growth and development makes it difficult for the board to allocate responsibility within the network. However, despite many challenges, the nine CD members' deep commitment is in my opinion a good example of European idealism and its results having a huge impact on many people, young and old, all over Europe.

The current and previous CDs comprise important elements of the new generation of AEGEE members, who have treasured past experiences and who are now deeply committed to fostering the ideals of AEGEE. This is what pushes the Human Resources Directors to develop the training policy of AEGEE, both from an internal point of view with the AEGEE members' manual, and from an external point of view, establishing joint training possibilities with external partners. People active in AEGEE develop skills and competences through what is called "non-formal and informal education" (non-formal consisting of workshops and training courses; informal consisting of new experiences gained through travel). The work of Anna Gabriel, the current Human Resources Director, aims to improve the capacity of AEGEE by making sure that active members receive the necessary skills and competences.

The work of the **External Relations Director** aims to facilitate the contact between us and possible sponsors in the private sector. This work is much more than just selling space for adverts on our website and internal publications. The biggest achievement of Laura Costica, current External Relations Director, has so far been the creation of a brand new careers section, intended to attract sponsors interested in recruiting flexible, open-minded AEGEE members who have developed skills such as intercultural communication. Crucial project support is also one of the tasks of the External Relations Director, since many companies prefer to be contacted by the European Board rather than by a local project manager.

For us as university students, the most important priority continues to be the development of European higher education. So it's hardly a coincidence that the current flagship project is called "Education Unlimited!". Laure Onidi, the current **Projects Director**, works to give direct support to AEGEE's projects by coordinating the CD's support for them. The flagship project receives priority, but other AEGEE-Europe projects can also always count on help and support. The Projects Director must also draft a proposal for the Yearplan Topic for the following year, which is subsequently voted on at the Agora. The project achievements are a kind of "business card" for AEGEE – they show that we are actively participating in discussing and implementing important issues that reflect European values.



The goal of the **Network Director** is not only to look after the current state of the network, but also to spread our ideals and values to cities where there is no AEGEE local, and to foster these ideals and values within the current network. The Network Director works closely together with the Network Commission (NetCom). Many achievements have been made recently, thanks to Pedro Vieira and Vaggelis Monogios, current and former Network Directors, and the Netcommies (supporters of the Network Commission). A small revival has taken place in France, especially with the growth of AEGEE-Paris and the organisation of the Model EU by AEGEE-Strasbourg. A novelty is the development of AEGEE in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Neglected for a long time, this important part of Europe was given priority by the CD. One crucial change that took place in 2006 still seems to need explanation. For a long time the Network Commission operated on the basis of fixed regions. These developed their own distinct identities and an organisational logic that became an obstacle to AEGEE's development, as well as a structure incompatible with the goal of AEGEE: a Europe without borders. The Network Director (at that time Vaggelis Monogios) and the other CD members agreed with the NetCom to re-structure the internal division of tasks, favouring a more flexible and dynamic approach that would meet the needs of the network. The new "Network Meetings" now offer a forum to discuss content and to spread AEGEE's ideals. These meetings are open not only to AEGEE members in the regions concerned, but to all interested students across Europe.

AEGEE's activities and achievements need to be communicated to the public as well as to all the members of AEGEE: that is the work of the **Public Relations Director**. Orsolya Balogh is currently establishing contacts with important sections of the media, and is promoting AEGEE at conferences and in external projects. The coordination of AEGEE publications such as "Key to Europe", "News Bulletin", "One Europe Magazine" or "Gazette", as well as the online newsletter of the CD, the "Telegram", is only a part of her work.

The projects and administration of AEGEE as an organisation of idealistic volunteers depend on funding from European institutions such as the **European Commission and the Council of Europe**. The European Institutions Director, Stefan May, has established contacts with key actors in the funding institutions and aims to keep up-to-date with programmes and developments in the field, in order to give AEGEE activities the best possible support.

The **Secretary General** plays a crucial role in the functioning of the organisation. Gergö Szigeti ensures communication both inside and outside of the organisation, dealing in particular with the thousands of emails that go via the Head Office account. The coordination of AEGEE's statutory meetings, as well as the general mailing of publications and information material to the locals, also count among the duties of the Secretary General.

Michele Turati, the **Financial Director**, ensures that money is managed honestly, auditing the financial report of projects and working groups and optimising the expenses of AEGEE-Europe. Reimbursements are also issued for the active members. Every euro cent that comes in or goes out is meticulously bookkept.

All this work is coordinated by Theijs van Welij, **President of AEGEE**, who shoulders the responsibility of the CD's activities. Ensuring the efficient, focused teamwork of the CD members and the volunteers from all over Europe is a difficult task that requires empathy and commitment. Moreover, the goal for our President will now be to encourage the members to reflect on the vision for the future of AEGEE, in order to avoid an identity crisis and instead to help our association to evolve together with Europe.

I feel lucky to have had the chance to get to know the people in the CD, who with their commitment, courage, professionalism and positive mentality have had such a positive effect on our association. I encourage you to see their work as a cohesive whole, with different tasks and personalities wrapped up in a vision which, through fostering our ideals and values in the key arenas of the wider world, has brought AEGEE a step forward in Europe.

Valentina Morselli, 22 years old and from Italy, joined AEGEE in 2004. As a proud member of AEGEE-Milano and AEGEE-Siena, she took a few months off in 2006 to join the CD in Brussels as CD General Assistant. She has a Bachelor's degree in International Sciences and is currently specialising in Diplomacy in Siena.





SUCCESSFUL FORMER AEGEE MEMBERS

by Wiebke Hahn and Johann Schembri

Karina Häuslmeier AEGEE Passau

Karina Häuslmeier started her AEGEE career as treasurer and president of AEGEE-Passau and later on performed these two tasks also on European level as a member of the Comité Directeur from 2000 to 2001. After her term in the executive board, she took over the coordination of the Yearplan project of 2002 "EURECA – European Education Campaign". Karina graduated from International Business and Culture Studies in Passau and Granada and obtained a Master of European Studies in Berlin. She works now as the Head of the Cultural Department of the German Embassy in Cairo. Wiebke Hahn spoke with Karina.

As diplomat at the Federal Foreign Office you are working in an international and intercultural environment. Did AEGEE have any influence on your career choice?

Since my teen days, I have always dreamt of working abroad but I could never believe that actually one day I would become a diplomat. In my time as president of AEGEE-Europe, I especially discovered how much I like to be part of a policy making process and to actually be able to contribute to it.

When you applied for your job, did you feel that the experience you gained in AEGEE was recognized positively? How was it perceived by your employer?

During the interviews and the group assignments as part of the assessment centre by the Foreign Office, I profited a lot from the experience I gathered in AEGEE. Having spent 1.5 years in the CD and worked with people from different cultural backgrounds, I could easily answer to questions concerning intercultural experience, leadership and teamwork skills and give vivid examples for it. I was able to prove that I knew what it means to carry responsibility and to manage projects from the beginning to the end.

Do you consider AEGEE as a valuable experience to prepare young people for professional life? What is, in your opinion, the most useful asset youngsters can acquire from youth work?

AEGEE was the best school for professional life I can imagine. I think I grew up and gained a lot of self-confidence in those years in AEGEE. Most of the daily routine of my professional life I had the chance to try out already before in AEGEE: holding speeches, chairing meetings, writing letters and project proposals, doing loads of things at the same time, communicating across continents etc. In AEGEE I started to learn how to work with difficult personalities, which one probably encounters in any job. Thus the most useful assets youngsters can acquire from youth work are communication skills.

Roger Bugeja AEGEE Valetta

An ESIB meeting held in Brussels in 1996 as part of the University Students Council – KSU (Malta) scheduled meeting, was what sparked the founding President Roger Bugeja to kindle the fire fuelling AEGEE-Valletta. In fact, 6 months of hard work led to the signing of the Convension d'Adhesion in the Autumn Agora of 1997 in Ankara kick-starting the organisation. Such results were the fruit of the combined efforts of the first AEGEE-Valletta board made up of people from several renowned organisations on campus and aided by AEGEE's regional Network Coordinator Fanny, who supplied the organisation with the tools to make the initiating flame turn to a blazing bonfire. In 2 years of Presidency, Roger Bugeja, along with the rest of the board, faced various logistical and financial difficulties. However, despite of this, the organisation became an Antenna due to a successful Summer University with twenty-two participants and eight team members attending. This happened after a busy summer working with EF – The English Language School. Fulfilling his role holistically, Roger Bugeja felt the need to pass on the hat to new blood of people, who where still in University. Corinne Cordina took over and took the organisation to the next level with local events and International Conferences. This did not impede Roger Bugeja from ensuring that the AEGEE spirit is inherited by each new board. In fact he makes it a point to organise get-togethers at his own home revamping the board and encouraging it to face boldly the upcoming challenges. Roger Bugeja was interviewed by Johann Schembri.

As Director of a Language School you are working in an intercultural environment. How did your involvement in AEGEE influence your career?

AEGEE advocates a borderless Europe implying mobility, intercultural relations, tolerance and respect for cultures and religions. Involvement in such an organization instills a sense of respect for all, irrespective of age, social position, race and creed. Everyone is different but everyone is equal. All this instilled the AEGEE values in my career move and this helped me to move up as Director of the School. Looking back through the years, I would say that without these values, my career achievements would have been harder to attain.



When you applied for your job, did you feel that the experience you gained in AEGEE was recognized positively? How was it perceived by your employer?

Being in AEGEE-Valletta exposed me socially helping me to move on in my career. Indeed, having already worked with EF before it helped me to kick off AEGEE in Malta by the organization of a Summer University. A clear example of the contribution of AEGEE in my life is the fact that I was hired as a Sociology teacher by the Headmaster of the school which we rented for our Summer University.

Do you consider AEGEE as a valuable experience to prepare young people for professional life? What is, in your opinion, the most useful asset youngsters can acquire from youth work?

Definitely, the world is much bigger than our own back yard. One must realize that there is loads to learn from many different people, thus one must always seek to keep an open mind to new cultures and religions. Being in an organization gives youth the opportunity to lead a simple and focused life just traveling for hours on a bus or sleeping in a gym with just a sleeping bag under your back. It's all about surviving, but surviving with an aim, a scope to share with other people the same values, irrespective of financial implications. Indeed, lack of money made us more creative and capable to do something with the little we had - building opportunities for others. If you want to do something that will benefit yourself locally and Internationally and offer this opportunity to many others, AEGEE is a must... Try it!

Andrei Popescu AEGEE Bucuresti

Andrei Popescu from AEGEE-Bucuresti is known as one of the most charismatic AEGEE members and has proven remarkable communication skills as member of the Network Commission and as trainer in many Academy events. As speaker of the Education Working Group and as project officer of "Socrates on the Move", he was also actively promoting students mobility. Andrei currently pursues a master in the field of Communication and has just been appointed as coordinator of the Youth in Action Unit for Romania. Andrei said more to Wiebke Hahn.

Professionally you are very much linked to youth work. Would you say that AEGEE had a big impact on your career choice?

In 1999 I started working in the Socrates program where I replaced an AEGEE member who was leaving the job. Our agency took over the administration of Youth in Action and considering the experience I have with youth NGOs in general and AEGEE in particular it seems the right place to be.

So, AEGEE had not only a big impact but it was actually twice the vehicle to get me where I am now. The opportunity was there and, as some wise people say, the best way to get rid of a temptation is to give in to it.

During the preparations for the Agora in Bucuresti you have proven outstanding crisis management skills and motivation. What do you consider personally as the most valuable skill you acquired during your activities in AEGEE?

I did!!!! The most valuable skill should be finding the right balance in knowing when to let go and when pushing even harder that you have ever imagined. This is what triggers a team to do its best and be able to do things that some might hate, some might love but all will remember for a long time and share with their grandchildren! I was lucky enough to be around these people who could do their "thing" and be able to develop a certain "something" commonly known as... trust! So fragile and so valuable!

And which was the task from which you learned the most?

Definitely working in the NetCom! I was lucky to be teammate of a bunch of nutcases! Fortunately for us, there was also a vision behind that drove us away from the mental institution! "Work all day and party all night" could have been a good motto - only that days and night used to get mixed quite often. As often as work and fun!

Do you think that non-formal education and the experience that young people can gain by youth work are recognised by employers? What is your personal experience?

For personal experience in job application see the first question! Generally speaking, leaving aside the "formal position" that I should adopt due to the nature of my job, I strongly believe that experiences acquired in non-formal and informal settings can be at least, if not even more, important than those obtained in formal environments, simply because they are personalized and much better tailored for individual needs. This is the real "school of life". But the trick is: are we ready to pay the price for having non-formal education skills recognized, which would demand a standardized set of criteria in order to assess them in a common way? Meaning, non-personalized forms of evaluation which leads to a vicious circle that hopefully will be broken soon. One step ahead could be YouthPass.



YOUNG EUROPEAN OF THE YEAR 2007 THE STORY OF A SUCCESS...

by Maria Nomikou

ID card

Name: Burcu
Surname: Becermen
Date of birth: 04/01/1981
Place of birth: Sivas, Turkey
Current place of residence: Istanbul
Studies: Undergraduate Degree on Translation and Interpretation
Profession: Conference interpreter
Favourite singer: Tori Amos
Favourite writer: Umberto Eco
Hobbies: Walking, dreaming, caring about her friends

Burcu Becermen "Young European of the Year 2006" Heinz-Schwarzkopf Foundation

It was in the year 2000 that Burcu first entered the office of AEGEE-Ankara, just at the moment when the antenna had learnt that they were to be the organisers of the next Agora. A few hours later she was already the secretary general of the Agora, and very soon she was one of the most active members of the antenna.

At the age of only 19, this small girl from Kayseri took on the challenge of managing an ambitious and at the same time amazingly difficult project – the "Turkish-Greek Civic Dialogue". I am not sure if every one of you can really understand what it means to fight for friendship and tolerance while the memories of the long-lasting conflicts between the two nations are still alive. I am not sure if every one of you can imagine a young girl meeting the two countries' top politicians and institutions, and managing to at least express her ideas and her dreams. Many people thought she was crazy, and they would even try and stand in her way. But Burcu and her team didn't give up. Over the next few years, thousands of young people heard about the project and participated in its events.

Four years later, after a lot of work, great responsibility, difficult moments and a lot of passion, Burcu put all her clothes, books and CDs in her luggage and moved to Brussels to fulfil her role as European Institutions Director and later President of AEGEE-Europe. I am sure that in the beginning only a few people believed that that small and sensitive girl could ever become one of the best Presidents of the association. With her hard work and idealism, she managed to convince everyone that she was strong and responsible, ready to deal with even the most problematic cases. Many project teams, work-

ing groups, training course participants and AEGEE members were supported and inspired by her.

And now, writing all this, I cast my mind back to that sunny June day when I wrote down why I was nominating Burcu for the award of the Young European of the Year. I remember the great excitement I felt when Karolina Wysocka and I were organising the "secret mission". It was so easy for us to write about Burcu and her achievements. Perhaps the difficult part was keeping it "short and simple", as we say. The envelope was sent at the very last minute, and when Burcu was told about it she could not believe it. Although we were amazingly optimistic, Burcu had even forgotten about it until she was invited for the interview. She was already one of the five finalists when she entered the interview room, and a few hours later she was the one. One month later she would stand in front of us, the award in her hands, talking about her dreams for Cyprus and the Caucasus. Her mother and her friends were so moved and so happy, and you could see the admiration on people's faces. The night ended in a nice bar in Berlin, full of great friends, where we celebrated the success! Everyone was so proud... everyone felt how much she had deserved it... and now everyone is waiting for her future plans!

This was just a small part of the story that brought Burcu this great success. While all her accomplishments are really amazing, what makes her even more special is that above all she is a very sensitive person with big heart...

If her life had a soundtrack, it would be the one from the movie *Amélie*...

If you see her in the street, you will recognise her from her romantic purple clothes, her nice hats and her mysterious glance...

If you want her to love you, offer her some nice music, a nice environment, a warm cup of tea and a smile, and just speak to her... she will listen to every single detail...

If you want to offer her a present, look for the most beautiful notebook. She will always be carrying it around with her, writing down the names of her favourite cafés throughout Europe.

If you have a friend like her, then you should be happy!



HONORARY MEMBERS - INTERVIEW WITH GUNNAR ERTH AND OLIVIER GENKIN

by Wiebke Hahn

Meeting with Gunnar Erth and Olivier Genkin, the two most recent honorary members of AEGEE-Europe, feels like digging in the archives of the Association. Having attended together more than 250 events and organised more than 40 European activities, both Gunnar and Olivier are living examples of European networking. They said more to Wiebke Hahn.

The honorary membership is the biggest appreciation of outstanding achievements. Among all your activities, which one do you consider as most significant both for you personally and the Association?

Gunnar: In personal level, I met my fiancée Agneta from Tirgu-Mures in AEGEE. Next to it, having been the editor-in-chief of 5 Key to Europe and the Key20, which shaped many members' vision of AEGEE, I consider the publications as my biggest contribution. Moreover, as manager of various European Schools, I was also very much involved in the field of human resources and I am proud to see that most of the concepts I introduced are still applied today. However, maybe the best achievement is that I really could make a contribution to many people's life by boosting their motivation to become active in AEGEE.

Olivier: The coordination of "EU & Europe", our flagship project in 2004, can probably be named as my biggest success for and with AEGEE. I initiated the project, pushed the conceptualisation phase and later on took the lead as project manager. Next to the involvement of many smaller locals, which had no experience in organising thematic events before, I consider the visibility that "EU & Europe" gained thanks to a concise PR strategy as remarkable.

Were these also the tasks you enjoyed most?

Gunnar: Despite my commitment to publications and internal education, my favourite task was being a member of the first Network Commission in 1997/98. Working closely especially with fresh members and providing concrete support to many antennae gave me the opportunity to see very quickly the outcome of my work.

Olivier: My biggest passion in AEGEE was the International Politics Working Group (IPWG) which gave me the chance to discuss serious political issues and at the same time to organise events with high quality content. This has motivated me to stay in the board for four years in total, three years as speaker.

You have given a lot to our Organisation. What did you learn from AEGEE?

Olivier: Especially in long distance cooperation in an international team the motivation plays a crucial role and in AEGEE I

learned to keep up the motivation of my fellows and myself despite difficult circumstances. Moreover, in my daily job I realise often the value of my AEGEE experiences in the field of project management.

Gunnar: When I started my career as a journalist, I could rely already on quite some task related experience I gained in AEGEE. The work on the Key to Europe has given me a useful preparation for my professional life, as I was responsible for the complete coordination process of the whole publication, including editing, layouting and negotiations with printing houses.

Olivier: In my opinion it is AEGEE's mission not only to educate its members to be truly European but also to assist them to acquire professional skills and train their leadership abilities.

You are famous for having visited more than 100 events. Can you name any favourite among the list?

Olivier: It is really different to pick one favourite... Maybe Agora Udine 2000, where I signed the Convention d'Adhésion for AEGEE-Cergy and became active on the European level of AEGEE; or "Europe's (Torn?) Identity", a high-profile conference of IPWG and AEGEE-Ljubljana, which gave birth to the "EU & Europe" project; or the "Diplomatic Seminar" of IPWG in București...

Gunnar: My favourite event is one of the first I visited. During the Summer University "Via Egnatia", organised by AEGEE-Skopje, AEGEE-Thessaloniki and AEGEE-Istanbul in 1996 I enjoyed three fantastic weeks travelling along the route which used to connect Rome and Constantinople in ancient times. But also the SU of AEGEE-Brescia as well as the ES in Brescia, Stana de Vale and Pécs are among the ones I enjoyed the best.

Both of you have been members for a long time and could observe AEGEE in various stages. Do you see a big difference between AEGEE when you joined and nowadays?

Gunnar: Definitely. AEGEE was a lot more flexible and the personal ties between the active players were stronger – maybe due to the fact that there were only 40 instead of 150 events per year. AEGEE was less bureaucratic, the people more idealistic, the visions bigger – it was a melting pot of ideas.



Olivier: Technical progress is a big advantage for us. In order to implement our visions we do not need to send dozens of faxes across Europe anymore, but can rely on mailing lists, websites, instant messaging and free phoning. The question now might be why we do not have such big projects anymore. One answer surely is the high level of other organisations in similar fields of activity, another is the high number of smaller and fun-oriented events AEGEE organises every year...

What do you consider as AEGEE's biggest challenge at the moment?

Gunnar: AEGEE lacks a clear vision. We should focus more on how the association can contribute to the society. Large projects should deal more with questions on the future and be more daring and we should try to organise again events for 200 or 300 people which deal with big contemporary issues.

Olivier: Yes, to be visible to the "outside world" we need more media attention, which could be achieved through bigger events. Just imagine the event EGEE I, which gave birth to AEGEE: 400 participants, no participation fee, entire pages of promotion in Le Monde, patronage of Mitterrand, Chirac etc.

We also tackled topics such as renewable energy, future of air transportation, sustainable society – it's time to dare again!

You both have taken over various positions and fulfilled many tasks in AEGEE. Is there anything you regret not to have done? And do you still have any dream you would like to realise within AEGEE?

Gunnar: Mainly I regret not to have worked with some great people of other generations. One of my dreams was to make a real journalism school and to create a functioning news network or an Erasmus portal with practical info and personal stories about studying abroad. I hope that someone else will do it.

Olivier: Oh, I remember our recent discussion about that Erasmus portal. Other nice projects I would love to have done are "Orient Express" (discovering Europe by travelling from Istanbul to Paris), large summits on OPEC, immigration and similar issues. And a big conference about "power"! Luckily, there are some more AEGEE generations to come.

Before Olivier (2005) and Gunnar (2006), only ten other members were awarded with the honorary membership:

Franck Bianchieri, the founder and, as first President, the leader of the Association for more than three years (1985-1988) was the first member of "AEGEE-Gold". A major enlargement of this group took place in the early 90ies, when 4 people at the same time were awarded the honorary membership:

Georg von der Gablentz (AEGEE-Bonn) was the establisher of the so-called "Quo vadis list", a group of candidates for a new Comité Directeur, which aimed at increasing the participation of locals in the decision making and reducing the distance to the executive board. Together with him, his fellow CD members **Vittorio dell'Áquila** (AEGEE-Milano), who was coordinator of the Summer University project for several years and hence paved the way for AEGEE's biggest project and **Michael Merker** (AEGEE-Leipzig), establisher of the first Eastern European antenna and Chairman of the Agora as well as Georg's successor as President of AEGEE-Europe, **Jeroen Hoogerwerf** (AEGEE-Amsterdam) received the award. Being the first female president, **Zsusza Kigyós** (AEGEE-Budapest) was followed already by many women who took the

lead in AEGEE, yet, she still is the only woman among the honorary members in our association. In 1995, **Philipp von Klitzing** (AEGEE-Aachen), who introduced also the concept of Yearplan projects in order to streamline AEGEE's activities, became honorary member as an appreciation for his long lasting activities especially concerning IT infrastructure. Also "ServerMaster" **Stefan Recksiegel** (AEGEE-Karlsruhe) was nominated as honorary member in 1999 for innovations and improvements which he brought forward in the field of IT. He was followed by **Markus Schoenherr** (AEGEE-Passau), who was awarded for his commitment to the network development in Central and Eastern Europe and moreover was the founder of the Visa Freedom Fighters, a working group that aims at fighting visa regimes and fostering mobility. **Michiel van Hees** (AEGEE-Eindhoven) has written AEGEE history for more than 10 years, during which he was active as a Liaison Officer, organised a Presidents' Meeting, founded AEGEE-Arnhem and finally introduced AEGEE TV and Media Schools in order to recruit and teach fresh movie makers. He joined the circle as 10th member in 2002.

Wiebke Hahn joined AEGEE-Mannheim in 2001, where she held various positions in the board. In 2003, she joined the Comité Directeur as Secretary General. After her mandate she decided to stay active in the field of statutory meetings and became a member of the Chair team from 2004-2006.



STRONGER AND STRONGER - THE NETWORK



November 2006, Gdańsk - Network Meeting



EUROPE – SO CLOSE!

by Marek Urban

One of my favourite expressions that I have ever heard in AEGEE is “Some call it Europe, we call it home”. It expresses very much the perception of an AEGEE-member towards this part of the world that we live in.

But are we “genetically programmed” for being perfect Europeans? Well, in my opinion no. It is something that made us really perceive ourselves not only as citizens of particular countries, but also our identity with a bigger community – the community of Europeans.

In my personal case AEGEE had an important, and probably the biggest influence on that. And this is in my opinion was the biggest achievement of this NGO – making people feel really European.

But this can be only built when the network we work in is really strong and AEGEE-locals are actively involved in the whole process of bringing Europe home.

In this section of Key to Europe we have been trying to show different approaches that lead to one aim – having stronger

locals in the network. Thinking about it one has to consider that AEGEE in every corner of Europe is working under different circumstances – legal systems, university culture, traditions of active citizenship, attitude towards European integration – all those factors influence the work of such NGO. However students, as creative creatures somehow find the way to achieve what they really want, fighting all the obstacles they meet on their way.

The diversity of Europe is also astonishing within the field of youth activities. It is very hard to homogeneous standards for everybody. AEGEE also have to keep on looking towards the right key in the minds of young people, but never try to break doors. Wherever it is found, our association is working actively for the big goal – bringing Europe close.



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“I finished my study at Stellenbosch University. At that point I had never heard of Nyenrode. For my further education I looked in France, New York and London. Until some Dutch friends mentioned Nyenrode. I discovered that it was a very well regarded Business University. Students at Nyenrode come from diverse backgrounds, experiences and previous studies; bonded together by shared motivation and their determination to succeed. This was very important for me as an international student.”

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As a Nyenrode student you study and live on campus. The range of committees and extra curricular activities ensure that any interest can be catered for here. No matter what choices you make throughout the year, there is a feeling on the campus that students are willing to help each other and learn from each other and they have a lot of fun while doing it.

Scholarships

When I decided to go to Nyenrode, I was up for two scholarships: from the ‘Class of 58’ and from the ‘Nationale Haringpartij’. I got the last one by writing a persuasive essay, which I defended before a jury. Since I financed my study at Nyenrode with a loan, the € 10.000,- was a welcome gift. As an added bonus the scholarship included mentoring by Klaas Wagenaar. It has been fantastic to be able to ‘pick the brain’ of someone like him.

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*Pieter Hundersmarck,
student at Nyenrode*



PORTUGAL'S ROCKING!

by Daniela Costa

"Tan tan tan tan ... tan tan tan ... tan tan tan ... the eye of the tiger..." - the song is old, the voices are young and motivated. Directly from the motion picture of "Rocky" to Porto, this song has become the official hymn of this local but is appropriate also to the second rocking antennae in Portugal. Since their joint Summer University, the first event in this country, they developed a lot not only the cooperation but also themselves as locals.

Celebrating one year of existence in March AEGEE Porto-Invicta has already 40 active members. Its short but intense curricula count with participation in international events such as SUPS, in Maribor or NetCom Farwest Meeting in Benicasim. Recently returned from his Erasmus in Barcelona, João Simões the founder of AEGEE Porto, explains how everything started: "In 2005 I participated in a Creative Communication Training Seminar (CCTS) in Romania. After one week in deep contact with AEGEE spirit I couldn't imagine how something like this just didn't exist in Portugal". Shortly after João first met his close friends one week after his return from Romania, this group of people became "AEGEE-Porto Invicta".

He was supposed to return to Porto only in July but Erasmus was not strong enough to keep him far away from what he calls the "AEGEE family". After visiting Porto for Christmas, the decision was definitely taken to come back to Porto and restart the work in AEGEE". Now João is the president of this young local and also the Portuguese Network Commissioner of AEGEE in this country.

Even if the legalizing process was difficult, it does not prevent AEGEE-Porto Invicta from being active. By now they organized a Local Creative Communication Workshop in March and NetCom Farwest meeting in April. Their biggest aim now is "Porto Tour 2007: Let's Racking Roll from", their first own Summer University, running from 1st to 15th August 2007 (more info: <http://www.aegEE-invicta.pt.vc/>)

The last year "A coffe for Europe" Summer University seemed to be a great success. It not only conquered the hearts of the participants (Laura Costica - now a member of the Comité Directeur - after that experience dreams about coming back to Portugal) but also caused that the meetings between AEGEE-Porto Invicta and Lisboa are usual. Some people are event the members of both locals at the same time! However, even if they plan future cooperation, they have also their own ambitions.

The a bit "older" portuguese antennae - AEGEE-Lisboa is developing new activities as AEGEE-Porto Invicta does. After the leaving of its president Pedro Vieira to the Comité Directeur, the local had to re-organize itself again in a new board. Guilherme Silva is the president now. In their local agenda there's a coming new Summer University (<http://aegEE.lisboa.googlepages.com/>). They are also thinking about to organizing languages courses for Erasmus students, side by side with extreme sports weekend in Sintra in May.

Worth mentioning is European Jouneys – an idea from a Joao Pita Costa, member of both antennas is that during one year, one time per month a European country is chosen and during that day the music, cinema, feed, art, culture of the country are presented and the language of the country is taught. As he says himself it's a great idea to promote Europe and AEGEE and also to involve Erasmus students. The first of such a meeting will be in held Porto and dedicated to Turkey. They count on the help of Meltem Unal, an Erasmus student, member of AEGEE Izmir and now Erasmus Public Relations responsible in AEGEE-Porto.

Although both antennas are still young ,the interaction between them and with the Network runs very well. Last year they organised a meeting between them and 50 AEGEE Ovideo members and Erasmus students. In May Porto will receive other 50 members from AEGEE Madrid. Seems that they already feel fully-fledged members of the "AEGEE family"

Daniela Costa - she 23-year-old and AEGEE member since it started to grow in Portugal. She is one of the most active members of AEGEE-Porto - now responsible for Events Department, earlier Vice-President. Daniela already graduated, studied Information Science. But this is not her only passion. Other interests are: Communication, Journalism, Photography and Travelling.





AEGEE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

by Robin Verschuren

Blame it on euro-scepticism, demanding universities, organisation culture or the Union system: the United Kingdom has never been very well represented in the AEGEE network. However in the past months quite some progress was made in the development of the network there. AEGEE-Cambridge which has been stable for years is finishing its most active year since its birth. Sheffield signed up last Agora and will already be upgraded to full antenna. London and Glasgow were revived and immediately got very active by organising an exchange with Leuven and one of the 10 Network Meetings taking place all across Europe. Oxford, Warwick, Manchester, York and Stirling are preparing to sign the Convention d'Adhesion and become official AEGEE antennae. This would make the AEGEE network in the UK bigger than ever before.

What can explain this sudden revival? The systems haven't changed. In fact British students are under more financial and academic pressure than ever before. The euro-sceptic attitude towards an association that promotes European integration and even has a French name is also still the same. Perhaps this unfavourable climate has activated the passionate fighters? Possibly increasing know-how of the British university system has improved the communication between European AEGEE

bodies and AEGEE members in the UK. It's also likely that with the threat of losing the UK for real, a positive upward spiral was created by these fighters mentality. Combining this with better communication with AEGEE bodies and investment in trips there could be the secret to its success.

The main challenge now will be to keep this positive energy flowing so that all individual locals can firmly establish themselves in their student communities. Quite likely, not all will be able to do this in the traditional way of AEGEE, so AEGEE's challenge will be to slightly adjust its profile and attitude towards these locals. Organising a Summer University in London with a budget of 140 euros per person for two weeks is simply impossible. As is it for students from Oxford to take a few days off to attend the Agora. AEGEE should be flexible in these matters, as after all we aim for European integration, and not just integration between countries that have flexible university systems and companies lining up to fund our projects.

GETTING BACK TO THE ROOTS

by Daniela Costa and Laure Onidi

A few years ago, it was "quite strange that AEGEE, an association founded in Paris, is poorly represented in France," a sentiment expressed by Olivier Genkin, founder of AEGEE-Cergy, and shared by many others. Now, according to information from NetCom Leuven, we can proudly say that the AEGEE spirit is again alive and kicking in France!

Robin Verschuren from the Network Commission explains that out of Lyon, Toulouse and Paris, the latter is "by far the biggest antenna, and also a very active one". They organise several events per month and their biggest recent success was a conference on 50 years since the signing of the Treaties of Rome. During this conference, the participants enjoyed a reception at the German embassy as well as a discussion with the Romanian Ambassador at the Romanian embassy. They are even thinking about organising an event in December 2007 within the framework of the Education Unlimited project! In Robin's opinion, the fact that their website has been translated into six languages is also "a great thing" since AEGEE was founded in Paris!

AEGEE-Lyon and AEGEE-Toulouse are "quite isolated, as there is very little AEGEE activity close to them". That is why it is sometimes a challenge for them to get in touch with the rest of the network. To overcome this, AEGEE-Lyon organised a

few exchanges, for example with AEGEE-Roma. The antenna also decided to organise a Summer University in 2007 (more info at www.aegEE-lyon.org).

Another antenna in this part of the network organising an SU is AEGEE-Strasbourg. They signed the Convention d'Adhesion at the Agora Warszawa. Recently they organised a Model European Union (MEU) in cooperation with the Take Control project. The event was a big success, already described in the Take Control chapter. The organisers were so moved by the AEGEE spirit that they might even take up this challenge again and organise the same event next year.

Although Robin admits that "the network is not very well developed in France", she considers that "compared with one or two years ago, it is going really well". The possibility of Lille soon becoming a new local is proof of that. It has already been accepted as a contact, and we might see another local joining the family at the Spring Agora in Valletta. In her opinion "it would be the perfect location for a new antenna, as Lille is centrally placed between London, Paris and the Belgian locals, so this could encourage development and cooperation".



CYPRUS: THE ISLAND OF UNSPOILT BEAUTY AND AEGEE

by Veronika Žagar

Although at the moment there is only one AEGEE antenna in Cyprus, the island has a very rich history of AEGEE activities. Many events organised by AEGEE-Magusa have been a great success, and as even more locals are being formed at the moment, Cyprus will undoubtedly become one of the most active areas on the AEGEE map.

The birth of the first locals

The first AEGEE local to be established on the island was AEGEE-Magusa, which officially joined the network in 1999 at the Autumn Agora in Hamburg. A year later, in 2000, another local was born, this time in the south part of the island, AEGEE-Lefkosia. The first big event in Cyprus was organised by AEGEE-Magusa in 2003; this was the Action Europe Planning Meeting, which took place in Magusa from 12th to 14th September of that year.

The first and only activity to be organised jointly by both AEGEE-Magusa and AEGEE-Lefkosia was planned for 2005. The AEGEE Cyprus Case Study Trip, aiming to put a spotlight on the Cyprus conflict from a subjective point of view, was supposed to take place from 7th to 21st September. The plan was to have a diverse group of 30 young people from the Greek and Turkish parts, as well as from the rest of Europe, working together in a multicultural team for two weeks at various locations in Cyprus. The Cyprus Case Study Trip was unfortunately cancelled, but it is currently in preparation once again.

The ups and downs

Throughout their history, both locals have faced many problems and have dealt with them in different ways. For AEGEE-Lefkosia, unfortunately, the lack of activity was one reason for the deletion of the local at the Autumn Agora Napoli in 2006. AEGEE-Magusa was also on the verge of being shut down. Following the tragic death of their member Arzu Mahrum, who died in a traffic accident on the last night of the Autumn Agora Izmir in 2005, many people were too demoralised to continue their work for the local. Many members quit because they graduated and left the island to continue their studies or to enlist for compulsory military service. Even though the future didn't seem too bright, older, more experienced members such as Oshan Sabirli and Umut Vehit, together with new members, managed to find solutions to the problems, and the local managed to survive.

Spring 2006 also saw the rejuvenation of AEGEE-Magusa. Following the local training course, organised in May 2006, a highly motivated new board and many other active members, led by the President of AEGEE-Magusa, Sander Kahveciler, managed to organise yet another legendary Summer University, entitled "Island of Desire" and dedicated to their beloved member Arzu.

After the success of the Summer University, the local decided to take on an even bigger challenge and organise the Network Meeting, which was supposed to happen from 12th to 15th October 2006, but was unfortunately cancelled by the Network Commission due to a lack of participants. The next big step was the application to organise the Autumn Agora in 2007. This time, AEGEE-Eskisehir had a better application, but as AEGEE-Magusa is not the kind of local that gives up, we can surely expect to see a future Agora held on the beautiful island of Cyprus.

Growing locals

Since AEGEE-Lefkosia was deleted, AEGEE-Magusa has been the only local on the island. But this won't be the case for long – many new contacts are being established and we can be sure that they will soon help to create a very active AEGEE presence on the island. With the help of Sander Kahveciler, the subcommie for the Cyprus region, three new locals are now being formed. The first, Güzelyurt, is on the north side of the island and was approved as an AEGEE contact on 28th February 2007. In cooperation with AEGEE-Magusa, the contact will also take part in the organisation of this year's Cyprus Travelling Summer University, "Mediterranean Madness Through History". Two more locals are to be formed on the island: AEGEE-Lefkosia in the north of the island and AEGEE-Lefkosia in the south. Even though they are actually in the same city, the city is still separated by a border, so it straddles two different territories. Well, for AEGEE the concept of borders is one that doesn't really exist, and the two locals are going to prove that. The plan is to start both locals separately, let them grow and then unite them as one antenna, which will be a big step for the dialogue between young people from both sides of the border. There will also be a conflict management training course organised for members of both locals, to help them form a bridge and a connection that will make all their future joint activities even more successful. This will, once again, help to make the idea of borderless Europe a reality.



IN THE MIDDLE OF... NETWORK IN CENTRAL EUROPE

by Marek Urban

At the beginning of the 90s, just after Berlin Wall fall down many groups of students from former communist countries started to look for something that could make them really feel part of Europe. At the same time one of the most idealistic youth organizations decided to expand its network to east. That was the beginning of big the success of AEGEE in Central Europe. AEGEE-locals in this part of the continent are one of the most active part of the whole network, organizing several events and delivering human recourses for the European level. It is hard to count all CD members coming from Poland, Hungary or Romania and this is only one of the European bodies.

Why AEGEE achieved so much there? Several reasons can be mentioned.

First of all AEGEE was one of the first NGOs from "western world" present in countries like Hungary or Poland. In these societies, where every kind of activity was limited and controlled by the regime, dynamic and colourful organization from Europe was like a breath of fresh air, that everybody wanted to try. It was offering easy contact with people from different countries and the totally unknown culture of active citizenship.

A very important issue was also the process of gaining EU membership by central European countries. The European idea was very popular so the NGOs who were promoting that could also benefit from bigger attention that was given to them many times. Could anybody think of an NGO that is bigger supporter of European integration than AEGEE – NGO that is integrating whole Europe on one gym during Agora. Indeed, AEGEE-locals organized several conferences, seminars and happenings in order to inform especially students about EU and the whole idea of European integration. One example – the project "Europe Maj Love" organized in 2004 by AEGEE-Gdańsk attracted 70 people who wanted to celebrate the EU enlargement.

AEGEE brought more Europe to Central Europe also in a less formal way. The hundreds of members who started to visit former communist block for Summer Universities and other events not only change their minds about the mysterious "East", but also let the visited ones to taste different lifestyle and make international friendships. Sometimes those events become symbolic – like the Travelling Summer University "V4U", called also "Visegrad Tour". The event co-organized by AEGEE-Budapest, AEGEE-Praha, AEGEE-Plzen, AEGEE-Bratislava and AEGEE-Kraków, even though finally had not been sponsored by Visegrad Fund, showed that the idea of co-operation in Central Europe is alive among young people.

A big strength of AEGEE was also the knowledge that members have been given during statutory meeting or internal education events. Skills like project management or public relations have been something new, especially in the world of student organizations. That is why AEGEE is seen as one of the most professional out of all student NGOs, association that it is worth to be in. Especially Polish locals are known for organizing a lot of career orientated events that help students to get familiar with modern job market. What is important – they do it in "AEGEE-way" – always having wider, European perspective but also being flexible and creative.

The most important question is what's next. The EU membership has been achieved; the European integration is not more a topic that can attract crowds of young people. What will happen with the network in this part of Europe?

The answer is easier when you look at the map. Just next to active central Europe there is still many places where AEGEE with its visions can do a lot. Is it going to be done? For sure there is enough potential for doing big things.

Marek Urban - proud member of AEGEE-Lublin. Always running, always talking too much. His favorite expression during every AEGEE-event is "where can I get some coffee?". His main activity in AEGEE for almost 2 years has been Network Commission. Biggest dream – to visit every country in the World. Apart from being AEGEE member, also studying International Relations and working as Marketing specialist for big polish software company





THE NETHERLANDS: PROFESSIONALISM IN AEGEE

by Gokhan Bozkurt

All AEGEE members and antennas of this Network are working for the same aim and ideals. They all achieve great things for those ideals. But it is not that easy to be always successful and consistent with the local management. It requires professionalism in work, the experience of past and a constitutional background of years. If you have a look to AEGEE Network from this aspect, you will easily see many good examples for the rest of the Network.

One of them is definitely The Netherlands. The locals and AEGEE members in this part of Europe have always been pioneer for the rest of the Network and the leading power for AEGEE ideals. This reality is still valid for today.

There are 11 AEGEE antennas in the Netherlands. The total number of AEGEE members is roughly a little over 2000 people which make up about 12% of all AEGEE's members in Europe. Every university city but one (Wageningen) has an AEGEE local. This makes the Netherlands extremely unique, network wise. Most Dutch antennas are really very well organised and they are structured in committees and working groups which are taking care of certain projects. They always have quite clear year programmes and clear target groups. This enables them to work efficiently and focus on their target. As a result the HR policy always works very well and manages to attract new active members who are essential part of the success.

Within the Netherlands, there are also quite some opposites among AEGEE Locals. The locals in the south are generally smaller ones, and a lot less "typically Dutch". AEGEE-Groningen is a bit isolated in the north and has a very individual style. AEGEE-Rotterdam and AEGEE-Delft are so close to each other that one might wonder why they aren't one local, especially because they have a good communication and co-operation among themselves.

AEGEE-Utrecht is not only the biggest antenna in the Netherlands but also in the whole AEGEE Network. They have 518 officially enrolled members according to the last activity report. AEGEE-Enschede is the second largest local in the Netherlands and third largest local in Europe. AEGEE-Utrecht is obviously very powerful in human resources while AEGEE-Enschede is probably the most structured one. AEGEE-Enschede has also the unique power of the internet servers and it's famous for having its own pub.

AEGEE-Maastricht is the most international one and the only local in the Netherlands that completely operates in English, due to its large amount of foreign members. AEGEE-Tilburg is the smallest local in the Netherlands but have many active members in European Level of AEGEE. Leiden is a slightly elite town, where AEGEE has always been for all the "different" people. AEGEE-Leiden also enjoys the unique background of being the first antenna that was set up in the Netherlands. AEGEE-Amsterdam likes parties but always organises at least one really good ambitious conference once a year.

The reason why AEGEE antennas grow stronger is the student climate and culture in the Netherlands. It has been always very common to study for 6 or even 7 years at university since the members take a "board year" in which they get a scholarship to be active in the board of their AEGEE Local and they work full-time only for AEGEE in this year. Because it's always rewarded to be in a student organization board, by means of refunding the scholarships in the months of 'lost time'. As a result, we can say that generally the universities are relatively generous in funding AEGEE-locals in the Netherlands and private companies also have a higher regard for active student life than most countries in Europe.

On the other hand, of course not everything is perfect. Recently difficulties have arisen due to new Bachelor - Master structure in the universities. The structure brings less flexibility to students which means less active students in NGOs. What is going to happen if the universities simply don't give any time to students to do anything else but study? This seems an important question to many youth NGOs but honestly not really relevant for AEGEE locals since they are good professionals with high AEGEE spirit to keep up the good work all the time.



MAKING TURKEY MORE EUROPEAN

by Gokhan Bozkurt

It is not always an advantage to be in a really big country if you want to set up a youth network. It was the reality for the members who set up AEGEE-Istanbul in Turkey 15 years ago. But now, it is obvious that the reality has changed. In fifteen years, many more AEGEE locals have been established. Today, there are 19 officially registered AEGEE Antennas in Turkey.

The total number of AEGEE members is roughly 1500 people all around Turkey. Most antennas are also official student clubs of the universities and get full support from the universities. Even though this seems like a good advantage sometimes it creates extra work and responsibility for the boards. Because AEGEE antennas are obliged to report all their activities and budget not only to AEGEE-Europe but also to their host universities.

Being a student club of a university surely also brings many advantages, especially for sponsorships in kind. Locals can even get free accommodation for their events in the facilities of their host university. Therefore, AEGEE events in Turkey generally have the best accommodation conditions in Europe and attract many young European every year to such a beautiful country.

But all these above mentioned reasons are not the real key of the success. It is the process of accession EU membership. Yes, since Turkey is a candidate country to European Union, Turkish antennas play a very important role and use this advantage very well. AEGEE members are generally respected and supported by the society. In the very recent past, it was AEGEE Locals in Turkey and AEGEE-Europe's successful lobby that led Turkey to the inclusion into European Union Education Programmes.

The European idea is still very popular in Turkey so the NGOs who are promoting this with their events and activities always get more attention and support. As a result, the things generally become much easier in Turkey than the rest of Europe, if you want to organize something related to Europe. The National Agency in Turkey also particularly supports AEGEE events and exchanges. Therefore AEGEE locals use the YOUTH programme a lot for their events and this creates one of the main sources for the budgets of AEGEE antennas.

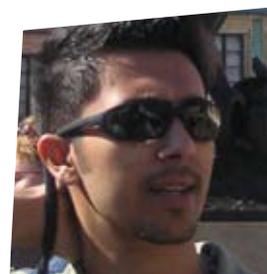
It is not only the European idea that AEGEE locals promote

but also the cultural activities and events make Turkish locals grow stronger. Travelling, meeting new people and discovering a new culture are obviously much easier in an EU member state than it is in Turkey. Because of the obstacles such as visas and geographical location, it is not an easy thing for a Turkish student to go abroad. AEGEE offers easy and cheap way to go abroad and discover other countries and their unknown cultures. AEGEE also gives students a chance to contact with people from different countries and to promote Turkish culture while learning other cultures of Europe. As a result, a common mutual understanding and respect between different cultures is born and all prejudice and misunderstandings between different nations are demolished by AEGEE. Turkish-Greek Civic Dialogue project was one of the best examples of this phenomenon. This project and AEGEE members in Turkey showed us that some so-called "impossible" things are actually very possible to achieve. These were relatively new things and great added values for all students in Turkey. Because of this, AEGEE is highly respected and supported in the society.

AEGEE Antennas are also playing a very important role for the rest of Europe as an information source for relatively unknown subjects in Europe such as Euro-Islam. Recently AEGEE-Ankara organized a very successful conference called "Eye Contact" on this issue. AEGEE-Canakkale also participated in two Euro-Islam exchanges in Passau and Sofia. In such subjects, Turkish locals are filling a very important position to show a different perspective to a common problem.

To sum up, AEGEE antennas in Turkey have always been pioneers of European integration and strongly represented the European idea. One might ask what is going to happen after the full membership of Turkey to European Union? Will AEGEE still be so popular? The answer is definitely "YES". It won't be the end for them but a new start that they have been waiting and working for a long time. Nothing changes in one second and as AEGEE has a mission to fulfill in other parts of the network were antennas belong to EU member states, it will of course still have lots of activities to take in Turkey.

Gokhan Bozkurt - joined AEGEE-Canakkale in 2003. He has been the President of his local for 1,5 years. Apart from this, he is a member of the Address Book Coordination Team and Balkania Netcom Team. He is also an Academy Trainer and board member of PRWG. Currently working in Portugal as a teacher.





BIRTHDAYS IN OUR NETWORK

by Veronika Žagar

After so many years in existence, our Network already has some relatively old members. Many antennae are celebrating important anniversaries this year, and they're no longer just throwing birthday parties... They're taking their celebrations one step further, organising interesting, content-based events, giving AEGEE members a chance to learn something new, express themselves or simply gain an interesting new experience. Imagination is obviously a very strong characteristic of AEGEE members – and what better occasion to prove it than on your birthday? Let's take a look at some of the most interesting birthday celebrations happening this year...

AEGEE-București

Born in 1997, AEGEE-București today has over 200 members. Over the past ten years, AEGEE-București has proved to be one of the most active antennae, organising numerous projects and events, both at local and European level. They have organised many local activities, including Summer and Winter Universities, and have participated in many different projects and exchange events. And now, the antenna is preparing to celebrate its tenth birthday...

"Perfect 10", the event to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of AEGEE-București, will take place from 14th to 18th May 2007. AEGEE-București plans to host 30 participants to celebrate their birthday with them. And how will they spend their time? The motto of the event is "Art isn't about being perfect. Neither are we...". You will have the chance to travel through time and re-discover what actually happened in the past ten years, both for AEGEE-București and for the whole of the rest of Europe. But most important of all: you will be able to express yourself through urban art, as AEGEE-București will be giving you the opportunity to use colour and inspiration to express your opinions, ensuring it will be a lively, colourful event. :)

AEGEE-Valletta

AEGEE-Valletta was founded in 1997 at the Autumn Agora in Ankara, and one year later, at the Autumn Agora in Hamburg, it was officially recognised as an antenna. The past ten years have been anything but calm: in September 2001, the Planning Meeting took place in Malta. Later, many very successful Summer Universities and other events were organised. In 2005, another big event took place in Valletta – the first ever European Boards' Meeting in the history of AEGEE.

After a very successful first ten years, AEGEE-Valletta decided that the time was right for the biggest AEGEE event of them all – the Agora. So this spring, AEGEE-Valletta is celebrating its anniversary in the best possible way, by hosting the Agora. "A vision for our future" will take place in Valletta from 26th to 29th April 2007, followed by the official post-event and the anniversary celebrations, entitled "From 10 to Infinity...". During these celebrations, AEGEE-Valletta will show you the whole island and throw an unforgettable birthday party!

AEGEE-Helsinki

Founded in 1995, AEGEE-Helsinki also celebrates an anniversary this year, its 15th birthday. During this time, AEGEE-Helsinki has organised many Summer Universities, Snow Universities and other events. They have also hosted two very successful Planning Meetings, which took place in Helsinki in 1994 and 2002. Every year the antenna also organises an exchange with another antenna, so it's easy to understand why their last 15 years have been very busy and packed with activities.

Their 15th anniversary celebration event, "Music shaping Future", will take place from 8th to 15th May 2007. And what are they preparing for their guests, besides the unforgettable AEGEE-Helsinki 15th anniversary gala party? Well, since Finland is hosting the Eurovision Song Contest, AEGEE-Helsinki is also hosting an event connected to the contest and Europe Day. Apart from attending the Eurovision semi-final dress rehearsal and enjoying a very special sauna party, you will also have some sweet moments visiting the chocolate factory. :)

AEGEE-Aachen

AEGEE-Aachen turned 20 this year and celebrated it in style! Aachen's 20th birthday gala took place in the centre of historic Aachen, in the nicest ballroom in the city. All the vital ingredients for a great gala were there: big band music, a nice buffet, a tombola with great prizes and the birthday celebration programme. Formal dress, AEGEE spirit and perfect atmosphere is all you need to celebrate the 20th anniversary in style – exactly the way it deserves to be celebrated!

So many events to visit and so little time? Every antenna has something very special to offer – celebrate with them, look back on their history and wish them an even brighter future!

YOUTH AND EU



April 2006, The EU (how)does it work? in Brussels



CIVIL DIALOGUE: MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD

by Basak Tusun

50 years after the signature of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the impact of the European project on our daily lives has grown hugely and it is estimated that, today, the majority of the national legislations directly stems from the European Union and many decisions of European institutions have a big impact on our daily lives. Whether we like it or not, the EU has become an unavoidable decision-making arena.

The role of NGOs in European Arena

The role and contribution of NGOs has been increasingly acknowledged by European institutions throughout the 90s, which resulted in a shift from the concept of "government" to that of "governance", involving a wide range of actors in the policy process. Over the last 15 years, the dialogue between European institutions and NGOs was developed. The development of civil dialogue as a concept has seen important advances in recent years - the Commission's White Paper on Governance, Minimum Standards on Consultation and the final inclusion of Article on participatory democracy in the European Constitutional Treaty.

Today, we can see hundreds of thousands of NGOs across Europe But what do NGO exactly do in the EU?

All NGOs have their own goals which they are in a challenge to reach and different fields to act, so it is not possible to give a single answer to this question. But we may tell that they have turned out to be unavoidable actors in the European debate and contributed hugely to bringing citizens closer to the complex EU machinery, becoming crucial partners in policy making.

European NGO Networks

Most NGOs that are active today on EU matters started working at EU level in order to bring added value to the local, regional, national or international level. European NGO networks represent their members and constituencies on a political level by lobbying political actors on specific issues by collecting information and channelling it between the national and EU levels, and by building their network's ability to participate in the European process.

AEGEE as a European Youth NGO Network

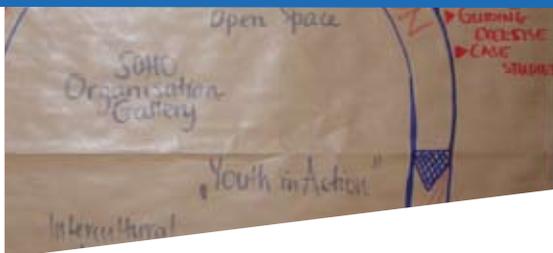
After its creation in 1985, AEGEE wanted to be a platform for young Europeans to discuss the future of Europe, to present their ideas to the officials of the European institutions, national governments and all decision makers to be an act of

lobbying for European integration. The participating students wanted to be the spokesman of the student environment and influence European policy. By being active citizens, they wanted to put hot social and political topics on the agenda of our discussions and address topics such as, peace and stability, globalisation, white papers of European Commission, discrimination, human rights and all topics that affect the societies we live in.

Looking back now, we can state that AEGEE achieved big success with its initiatives, events, projects and lobbying acts in the previous 22 years. For example, in the early period, the association successfully lobbied for the implementation of the Erasmus Mobility Scheme. In 1996, AEGEE was invited as the only student NGO to a round table talk on the Euro currency and afterwards took a big initiative to promote the new currency to youth. Later on, the association took the challenges to organise different events in war zones and conflict areas such as the statutory meetings in Novy Sad and Fagamusta in Northern Cyprus. From 2000 on new successful projects were born: Education for Democracy; Eureka, a contribution to the design of a new education programme for the enlarging European Union. And AEGEE successfully offered its experience in bridging East and West in the environment of the EU enlargement in 2004. Also different activities were organised to strengthen democracy and reconciliation in countries such as Ukraine and Cyprus.

Nowadays AEGEE is increasing its efforts to strengthen the organisation's position by building new partnerships in European arena. The association is involved as a member organisation of European Youth Forum to work for the interests of all young people, involved in Europe-wide campaigns such as the 'All Different- All Equal' campaign of Council of Europe and have organised joint projects with different partners like My Europe@Home Project with European Movement. We are sure that AEGEE will make big achievements to bring the European youth closer to European Institutions and make their voices heard in EU in the future.





MY NAME IS ACTION, YOUTH IN ACTION!

by Maria Nomikou

Since the 1st of January 2007, the Youth in Action programme is a reality. It is built on the experience of the previous "Youth for Europe" (1989-1999), European Voluntary Service and Youth program (2000-2006) and it is aiming at the promotion of European cooperation in the Youth field, active citizenship, tolerance and intercultural understanding among young people through non-formal activities.

The new program brought new age limits, new partner countries and funding possibilities for European Organizations. So, from now on, always depending on the specific action of the program, young people from 13 to 30 years old, from member states of European Union but also from other parts of the world with an emphasis to South Eastern Europe, Central Eastern Europe, Mediterranean partner countries and Turkey, can participate or organize exchanges, European Voluntary Service, trainings, seminars, youth projects and youth initiatives or work on youth policies and European Youth Organizations.

AEGEE has quite some experience in the previous Youth Program in local and European level. Always aiming at the success of our plans and projects, we managed to submit numerous successful applications in different actions of the program. Many local antennae organized exchanges or seminars in cooperation with other locals or very often other youth NGOs such as the very successful "Participation through education, education through participation" project organized by AEGEE-Poznan or Voluntary Summer University by AEGEE-Zaragoza, where participants and organizers entertained the inhabitants of very small villages in the area of Aragon. On the other hand, in the European level, we had the chance to break the borders of the European Union and get supported by the Youth program for important activities such as the Case Study Trip in Azerbaijan and Georgia or the training course "European School 1" in Odessa. AEGEE-Europe and some locals such as AEGEE-Tbilisi and AEGEE-Tartu experienced the European Voluntary Service while numerous young people from Central Eastern Europe had the chance to do Job shadowing for some days in Brussels, Greece, Netherlands and more. It is important to mention that since the day that the negotiations about the new Youth in Action programme started, AEGEE took an active role in the discussions by giving feedback based on its experiences.

The new Youth in Action program (2007-2013), with 915,000,000 Euro budget and through its 5 different actions, is going to support many youth NGOs in local, national or European level, International Youth Organizations or institutions working in the youth field, such as Council of Europe and United Nations, the European Youth Forum, the National Agencies of the programme, activities organized by the Presidencies of the European Union and of course individuals, who will have the chance to participate in one of the activities or work as a volunteer abroad and get a "YouthPass" certificate, which is going to be of great benefit for their future educational and professional life.

AEGEE, just like many other similar youth NGOs, can benefit from the program from different perspectives. AEGEE antennae can apply for exchanges, youth initiatives, democracy-focused projects, seminars, trainings, Case Study Trips or send and host volunteers under the frame of European Voluntary Service. On the other hand, AEGEE-Europe can get support for its operating costs or the European level projects in cooperation always with the antennae, the working groups and the project teams.

At this point it's worth mentioning that in the past AEGEE was one of the youth NGOs that used the Youth program with the aim to improve the quality of its projects without depending all its actions on it. Every year about 150 events and 100 Summer Universities have a place in the calendar of events of AEGEE-Europe, while just the 5% is supported by the Youth program, fact that proves that young people should always keep on having dreams, organizing youth activities and promoting its principles.

We are waiting for the locals and project teams to contact the National Agency of Youth in Action in their countries or the Institutions Director of AEGEE-Europe for applying for the grants of the Youth in Action program.

Maria Nomikou is a member of not only one local (Athina, Zaragoza, Patra) and it's difficult to count her activities in AEGEE. Now she is the Speaker of AEGEE-Academy and she is very qualified for this position - Theatre Studies and the European Youth Forum Pool of Trainers.





THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME... AEGEE'S CHILD GOES TWENTY by Johann Schembri

Today we commemorate the 50th year from the creation of the European Union, and, through the successful achievements of our predecessors, the 20th birthday of what now the European Union perceives as a phenomenon, the ERASMUS Programme.

20 years ago in 1987, an AEGEE Europe team met President Francois Mitterand with a main goal to convince the President that the creation of the ERASMUS programme which was proposed back in 1985, was at risk. This meeting was initially intended to commemorate the 30th year from the signing of the Treaty in Rome back in 1957.

We now look back and thank our founder Frank Biancheri how he had found the words to convince President Mitterand that it was unacceptable that there were no funds available to launch such a programme. A few weeks later following this historical meeting for AEGEE, the European Council of Education Ministers adopted the ERASMUS programme.

Our crucial support to ERASMUS opened a new era in terms of access of citizens to the European dimension!
Frank Biancheri.

What AEGEE has done to the Erasmus programme did not stop at the inception of such programme. All over the years AEGEE antennae did their best to establish themselves as a hub for the Erasmus Students. Events varied from international student parties to language courses, workshops on several topics and music events.

For example AEGEE-Munster welcomes the Erasmus students in Munster by appointing tutors who themselves were abroad or who are simply interested in getting in touch with foreign students. AEGEE-Leuven encourages the students that they are there for help and through its own website expresses that it knows everything about Leuven and Belgium. These and many other antennae assist Erasmus students assist with all sort of information. Some antennae also hold introductory meetings every time there is a new inflow of Erasmus students to help them adjust and give important tips for the new experience.

Moreover, students who get the opportunity to participate in the Erasmus programme often discover AEGEE through the events which AEGEE antennae organize for international students.

'Whilst doing my Erasmus Programme in Verona, I discovered AEGEE and it was actually through a former president of AEGEE-Valletta Charlene Sciberras, who at the moment was living in Verona. She told me about her experience in AEGEE and I decided

to join the organisation once back home. I still remember clearly my first AEGEE activity - Mdina by Night for Erasmus students in Malta, perfect event for someone who was badly missing Erasmus life.'

Sarah Jo Portelli, AEGEE-Valletta

An attractive project which is being done by AEGEE-Valletta is the Erasmusic Project: music nights specifically from-to Erasmus students at various venues. This project enhances cultural exchange at its best with music nights held in karaoke style with instruments to create a fun atmosphere and most of all keep friendship at the highest levels.

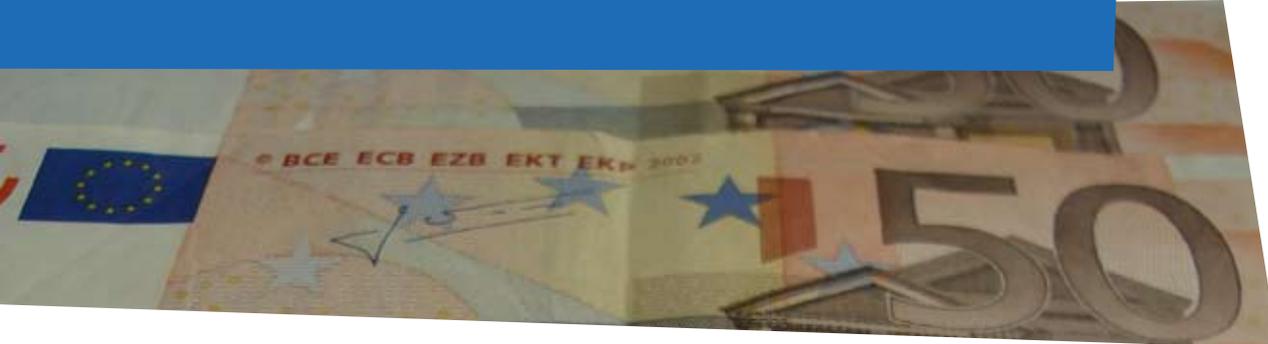
An Antenna does not have to wait for a Summer University or another event to hold a European Night in AEGEE style. Erasmus Students can easily be transformed into AEGEE participants and taste an AEGEE style event through our typical European Nights. Such event can easily be hosted at a European Village where through collating information on European Countries, the Erasmus Students will be the first to promote their country's general knowledge, cuisine, drinks, music and whatever enriches our beloved European Diversity.

Although some might perceive Erasmus events as less thematic, one should remember that these activities carry with them a backbone from our fields of action. Moreover, these students are very receptive to AEGEE events since they see in AEGEE a helping hand in case of any problems they might find. We have done our best not to lose the Erasmus Programme since its inception stage, now we need to keep AEGEE where it belongs within this context. What can we do about this... the least we can do is tell these students that if it was not for some stubborn AEGEE members back twenty years ago, they would not be living such a remarkable experience.

AEGEE's child has now passed by its teenage years, and after its twentieth year, we cannot just look back and see how this child evolved. We should look forward and see how we can help these Erasmus students believe that a European Citizenship is our next achievement to build Europe on strong ideologies. There's no need for a border, there's a need for a village of hope enriched by the experience of these lucky one and a half million European Students.

Johann Schembri - AEGEE-Valletta member since 2002 and Board member since 2005. In 2006, he was appointed President and till then strived to keep the antenna on track towards a remarkable 10th anniversary in 2007. Proud to make part of a great Key to Europe team.





FATF – AEGEE'S LONG-TERM SUPPORT PROGRAMME

by Radu Racareanu

You have worked hard to organise a great event, you have prepared an amazing programme, you have managed to get a lot of media attention, and you have even found sponsors to cover all the expenses. But there is one problem: the money will come only in after the start of the event, and your existing funds are not sufficient. This is one of the very frustrating situations that youth organisations such as AEGEE encounter quite often.

A different sort of “Big Brother”

This is where FATF (Foundation AEGEE Trust Fund) comes in. Its mission is to support AEGEE and AEGEE projects and events, promoting European integration, mutual understanding and intercultural tolerance and cooperation among students from all European countries. Furthermore, it promotes everything that is related to this, in the broadest sense, including things that belong to it and/or can be beneficial for it.

Despite appearing quite complicated at first glance, the reality is quite simple. The current generation of AEGEE members can benefit from the knowledge and experience of Les Anciens (AEGEE alumni) while enjoying temporary access to available funds in order to bring their ideas to life.

“The Experts”

After a series of very successful projects, in the years 1998-99, AEGEE faced several problems, including a lack of continuity in activities, lost contacts, and inadequate project and financial management. There was growing concern for the need to preserve continuity and knowledge transfer and increase efficiency, especially among successful and very experienced members. Action needed to be taken. One step that was taken was the creation of the Human Resources Working Group (the Academy); FATF was another.

“I remember, at my first Agora in Turin in 2004, seeing these people on the stage presenting something I was just dreaming about. They seemed so experienced and so unreachable,” confesses Michele Turati, Financial Director of AEGEE-Europe and Treasurer of FATF. “After three years, I realised that they were not unreachable. I have covered similar positions in AEGEE and I am proud to have contributed to the history of AEGEE as they did.”

Bringing together a pool of very experienced AEGEE members to offer their project management expertise, FATF is

managed by a board of four people: two members of Les Anciens and two members of the Comité Directeur.

This guarantees a balance of perspectives and knowledge when decisions are taken.

Success stories

In order to obtain support from FATF, it is very important that the applicants work and behave professionally. Thus, the young AEGEEans also familiarise themselves with “real-life” institutions and external partners. What is required is a professional application with a detailed explanation of the project aims and the reasons why FATF support is needed. At the same time, constructive feedback will be given to the applicants in order to improve their way of working.

It sounds complicated, but in reality it is simply about putting in your best in order to achieve the most. Quite a few projects have already benefited from each type of support that FATF offers: loans for help with liquidity problems, project management assistance, and application assistance. Recently submitted applications have been very successful. For example, the effective organisation of AEGEE's most advanced PR training course – the Public Relations European School 2 in Pecs – was made possible only by the liquidity loan from FATF, as the money from the two grants awarded did not arrive until the end of the event. The team of the current Flagship Project “Education Unlimited” receives professional advice from FATF, while the Result Brochure of the Caucasus Case Study Trip is being published with help from FATF funds, since the second instalment of the Youth Grant will arrive only after approval of the final report.

FATF – a resource to be used

FATF, though not directly connected with the structure of AEGEE, is highly useful and efficient. It aims to increase the professionalism and reliability of AEGEE members and to prevent the sad and frustrating situation of having to downsize projects due to lack of starting resources. “Unfortunately it is still underused because it is not well known enough and because it has strict rules for applicants. At the same time, this is what ensures its efficiency: giving support only to professionally organised projects,” concludes Michele Turati.



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“Efficacité et transparence des Acteurs européens”

O Porto é a mais recente cidade portuguesa a integrar o conjunto de 240 cidades europeias onde a Association des États Généraux des Étudiants d l'Europe (AEGEE) se faz representar. A denominada AEGEE Porto Invicta (API), nasceu, assim, em meados de 2006 com o objectivo comum ao das suas congéneres, o de reunir estudantes universitários de áreas de conhecimentos distintas, mas com uma vontade em comum: "a promoção de uma identidade europeia".

"Porto is the most recent city which now belongs to the 240 european cities, where Association des États Généraux des Étudiants d l'Europe (AEGEE) is represented. AEGEE Porto-Invicta (API) was born at the beginning of 2006 with the same objective as their European partners: to attract university students from the different fields of studies but with something in common: "to promote a european identity."

[PORTUGAL - Editonweb.com, October 2006](#)

Stoiska z książkami, folderami i słownikami, a wokół różnojęzyczny gwar i wielu zwiedzających - w auli UMK odbyły się wczoraj targi językowe. Można było tam znaleźć oferty szkół językowych, pomoce naukowe, a także dowiedzieć się, jak wyjechać na staz lub kurs zagraniczny oraz jakie certyfikaty można zdobyć w Polsce. Chętni porównywali oferty, zapoznawali się z lektorami, zapisywali się na kursy oraz na próbne certyfikaty. Impreze zorganizowało Europejskie Forum Studentów AEGEE – Torun w ramach European Day of Languages.

Stalls with books, folders and dictionaries, multilingual rumble and lots of visitors around: in the hall of the Nikolai Copernicus University in Torun a language fair took place. Offers of the language schools, as well as science help could have been found there. One could also have gotten to know how to go for a language course abroad or what certificates can be considered valid in Poland. Interested people compared the offers, got to know with lecturers, registered to the courses and received sample certificates. The event was organised by the European Students' Forum AEGEE-Torun in the frame of the European Day of Languages.

[POLAND - Gazeta Wyborcza, November 2007](#)

12 yıldır gerçekleştirdiği projelerle Türkiye'deki gençlik STK'ları arasında önemli bir yere sahip olan AEGEE-Ankara (Avrupa Öğrencileri Forumu-Ankara) bünyesindeki 6 proje ve çalışma grubundan biri olan Uluslararası Politika Çalışma Grubu, 2006 Kasım ayından bu yana, 2-9 Eylül 2007 tarihleri arasında gerçekleşecek olan Diplomatik Seminer için çalışmalarını sürdürüyor. Bir hafta sürecek olan seminer, Avrupa'nın dört bir yanından diplomasiyle ilgilenen gençleri bir araya getirecek.

With the projects it has accomplished during the last 12 years, AEGEE-Ankara (European Students Forum-Ankara) has an important statue among youth NGOs in Turkey and since November 2006, as one of the project and working groups of AEGEE-Ankara, International Politics Working Group works on "Diplomatic Seminar" that will take place between 2-9 September 2007. The seminar will last a week and will gather youngsters from all around Europe interested in diplomacy.

[TURKEY - Delikalemi.com, March 2007](#)

19 апреля и 26-27 сентября AEGEE-Moskva отпраздновала ежегодный Европейский день Языков! Более 100 студентов из различных университетов Москвы собрались в ГУ-ВШЭ и РГГУ, чтобы поучаствовать в увлекательных языковых семинарах. Были проведены открытые уроки испанского, итальянского, французского, шведского, греческого, голландского и турецкого языков, игры, лекции о возможностях обучения в ЕС и розыгрыши призов от спонсоров. Иностранные члены AEGEE выступали на этих уроках в качестве учителей и экспертов. Russia

On 19th of April and 26th - 27th of September, AEGEE-Moscow celebrated the annual European Day of languages! More than 100 students from different universities of Moscow gathered in SU-HSE and RSUH to participate in fascinating workshops, which were held. Open lessons of Spanish, Italian, French, Swedish, Greek, Dutch and Turkish languages, simulation games, various lectures about opportunities of studying in the EU countries and special gifts from sponsors were offered to participants. Foreign members of AEGEE and experts on those lessons were the teachers.

[RUSSIA - Press Center of RSUH, September 2006](#)