



October 22, 2009
Thursday

EFIL: The True Eurostar

Preparations are well underway for a new European Citizenship Trimester Program aimed at fostering and increasing opportunities for young people across Europe to go on an exchange and enjoy an intra-European intercultural learning experience using the AFS model and values.

Initiated by EFIL (European Federation for Intercultural Learning) the program hopes to reach all Partners within the network in an effort to contribute towards increasing the visibility and strengthening the role of AFS in Europe.

EFIL is the umbrella organization of 22 European AFS

organizations which was founded in 1971. "EFIL has been actively organizing programs that can improve the quality of volunteers from our member countries with support from the European nations," said its Secretary-General, Paul Claes.



Paul Claes
... Continue on page 2

Cover of daily bulletin, AFS World Congress

INDEX

EFIL Business

- European Heads of Office meet in Malaysia
- EFIL promotes Balkan partners at poster session AFS World Congress

EFIL trainings and projects

- Brussels Camp of the European Citizenship Trimester Programme
- EurAfrican Partnership for Change – African partners meet at AFS World Congress
- EFIL Volunteer Summer Summit 2010 – preparatory work in progress
- Call for participants – Study Session on European Citizenship

Partner news

- Partner news
- Focus on AFS Spain
- 120 volunteers come together in Finland

Europe

- Multilingualism platform launch
- European Youth Forum – what's new?

EUROPEAN HEADS OF OFFICE MEET IN MALAYSIA

On the 19th of October, National Directors of European AFS organisations met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for their second Heads of Office meeting of the year, prior to the AFS World Congress.

At the backdrop of a Europe where increased mobility is promoted at all levels, there's an important role to be played by AFS managers, supported by their national Boards, to make our programmes reach out to larger numbers of pupils and schools. The HOO meeting participants discussed the topic and suggested ways on how to reach the goal of expanding the volume of exchanges in Europe, by looking at the mechanisms behind developing versus stagnating programmes.



European Directors meeting in Malaysia (photo: EFIL)

After the successful introduction of three new major EFIL projects, the Volunteer Summer Summit, Intercultural Dialogue Day, and the European Citizenship Trimester Programme (with the upcoming Brussels Camp), it was decided to aim for an annual organisation of each of the three events. The HOO session aimed at discussing what can be done to further improve those projects, increase our visibility, strengthen our cooperation. It was unanimously agreed that all three projects are worthwhile initiatives that need to

continue with the greatest possible support of the EFIL partners.



Heads of office meeting, Kuala Lumpur (photo: EFIL)

Two of the strategic goals of the Vision 2020 were chosen for further discussion at the meeting: “reach 2000 participants on 18+ programmes by 2013” and “implement structured programme content linked to a defining global issue by 2013”. Following the AFS International initiatives in the area of branding, Partner Organisations gave an overview of how they are dealing with the new branding concept at national level.

In 2010 the European Commission will fund the first student exchanges under the Comenius programme. Following the latest information on the Comenius Programme, Partners discussed where we stand in Europe and in each country. A potential niche for AFS is to get involved with the pre-departure and/or on-arrival trainings, for those National Agencies that will decide to outsource these trainings.

EFIL’s Secretary General presented a new project proposal, as worked out by the EFIL secretariat. The project aims at strengthening the relations with schools. The Partners expressed a great interest in the project, and gave EFIL the go-ahead to proceed with the development of the concept.

The next Heads of Office meeting is planned for May/June 2010.

EFIL PROMOTES BALKAN PARTNERS AT POSTER SESSION AFS WORLD CONGRESS

From 20-24 October 2009 AFS leaders from around the globe gathered in Kuala Lumpur for the 22nd annual AFS World Congress. AFS Malaysia was the host for approximately 170 Partner Chairs, Board Members and Directors, as well as International Trustees and Managers.



EFIL poster at AFS World Congress (photo: EFIL)

One of the traditional sessions of an AFS World Congress agenda is the Partner Poster Gallery in the accountability market place. EFIL’s poster this year promoted the new partners in the Balkan countries.

Over the past three years EFIL has developed activities to develop new network partners in Europe. Feasibility studies were conducted in 2007, leading to the decision by the EFIL Board to work on the opening of programmes in the Western Balkan countries Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Relevant progress has been made, and by the end of 2008, officially registered non-profit organisations in all four countries, run by committed volunteers, were established. With the support of AFS International, a process has been started to set up branch offices of AFS International in each of the four Balkan countries, enabling Partners worldwide to

engage in student exchanges with the four new Network Partners.



EFIL poster at AFS World Congress (photo: EFIL)

BRUSSELS CAMP OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP TRIMESTER PROGRAMME

First ECTP pupils meeting in Brussels in just 9 days!

The newly launched EFIL European Citizenship Trimester Programme is entering the last phase of preparation. Last details are being finalised and everybody involved is excited and ready for the ECTP camp beginning on 22 November in Brussels. At this final stage of the preparatory work we are expecting 107 students from 12 different European countries, who have successfully completed their trimester exchange programme.

The venue Destelheide Vormingscentrum in Dworp/Brussels is a well known location for the Belgian volunteers and also for many others who have attended the EFIL meeting of National AFS Pools of Trainers in 2008. The members of the support and preparatory team who are based in Brussels and surroundings recently held their final meeting at the actual venue.

Next to many interesting workshops about sharing experiences, intercultural dialogue, European citizenship and much more, ECTP participants will visit the European

Parliament and the European Commission. Being in Brussels, they also will have the possibility to see some of Brussels landmarks such as the Grand Place and sense its cosmopolitan atmosphere.

This years pilot ECTP camp has been an enormous endeavour for EFIL, and it's the plan to organise the end-of-stay camp in Brussels on an annual basis. All parties engaged (participants, volunteers, trainers, national offices, EFIL office) will have the opportunity to share their comments and suggestions in order to improve the ECTP 2010.

EURAFRICAN PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE – AFRICAN PARTNERS MEET AT AFS WORLD CONGRES

The AFS World Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, provided an excellent opportunity for the African partners in EFIL's project "EurAfrican Partnership for Change" to meet in person to discuss the project objectives and set up an initial working plan, prior to and in preparation of the upcoming meeting of the project Steering Group in Lisbon, Portugal, 15-18 November. Attending the meeting in Kuala Lumpur were AFS Ghana (Director Kwame Otchere and Chair Philip Addison), AFS South Africa (Director Theo Ripplinger and Chair Bongani Khumalo), the Organisation for Intercultural Education (OFIE) of Kenya (Director Athman Lali Omar and Chair Koitamet Olekina), Bert Vercamer from AFS International (Consultant in the project), and Paul Claes (EFIL Secretary General).

The project aims at empowering youth organisations and structures in three African countries, through the sharing of expertise between 12 European AFS organisations and AFS Ghana, AFS South Africa and the Organisation for Intercultural Education in Kenya. All in all, 24 experienced youth workers from 14

countries will be involved in feasibility studies and on the spot trainings aimed at African youth workers and multipliers. The project will close with an international seminar in Vienna, Austria, bringing together the key participants to share their experiences, debate on the main conclusions, define potential paths to move ahead, and formulate recommendations.



African partners in "EurAfrican Partnership for Change" project (photo: EFIL)

The launch of the project has triggered a lot of enthusiasm with all involved. EFILife will keep on updating you on the project progress.

EFIL VOLUNTEER SUMMER SUMMIT 2010 – PREPARATORY WORK IN PROGRESS

Every month, we bring an update on the developments in preparation of next year's EFIL Volunteer Summer Summit, which in 2010 will take place in Hungary. The past weeks brought alive the new motivated preparatory team, who will work on the event preparations in the upcoming year!



The team composition is definitely diverse, with a lot of experience and competence: Anikó Kubatov – project co-ordinator from the hosts' side, Eliza Popper – AFS HUN and EFIL intern, Maria Luisa Loução – AFS POR, Katya Bagdasarova – AFS

RUS, Mirko Hoff – AFS GER and David Békési – the co-ordinator of the Hungarian Support Team. The team will be assisted by EFIL's Training Co-ordinator, Izabela Jurczik, and by the Volunteer Co-ordinator from the Hungarian AFS office, Diana Rosta. The group has already started its work and an important preparatory meeting is planned to take place at the end of January 2010 in Hungary.

In the meantime the online communication is buzzing with many emails, chats and skype meetings. The first issues of the working agenda will focus on the event promotion, visual identity and initial discussions on the roles within the preparatory team. The input of the past Summits' participants and organisers, as well as the feedback of AFS organisations and the EFIL Board is taken into account, to work on the further improvement of the project. The 2010 leading VSS theme "Learning across Generations" will be guiding the prep team in planning the event content, as well as the profile of participants – all age groups are welcome!

Stay tuned as more information will be shared in the next editions of EFILife. While waiting for an update on the Summer Summit website, every AFS volunteer is invited to join the Facebook group "EFIL Volunteer Summer Summit 2010 HUNGARY". See you next year in Hungary!

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS – STUDY SESSION ON EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

Another interesting training opportunity for volunteers is coming up: a study session taking place 30 January – 6 February 2010 in the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg has just opened for participants' application. The full title of the event is "Responsible citizens of intercultural Europe – exploring the link between intercultural

competence and citizenship” and its main focus will be on the connection between young people’s intercultural development and their responsibility in society. The intention of the project is to give attention to global education and European citizenship into the educational framework of AFS exchange programmes. An important circumstance and additional reason for that is the new European Citizenship Trimester Programme initiated by EFIL in 2009, which will continue in the coming years.

The preparatory team of the event (Anne Hitzegard – AFS Germany, Eva Vitkova – AFS Czech Republic, Edoardo Laurenti – AFS Italy, Nuno Guerreiro – AFS Portugal and Pablo Castineiras – guest trainer from YMCA Spain) has started its work and will hold a preparatory meeting at the end of November. The study session is supported by the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe, which helps enormously in the smooth running of the organisational side of the project.

All the interested volunteers (primarily under 30 years old) should approach their national AFS organisation to apply for the session. The deadline has been set for the 17th of December 2009, don’t miss it!

PARTNER NEWS

In each edition of EFILife, we dedicate some space to partner news, including personnel changes as well as relevant events that have taken place over the past month.

AFS Latvia announced the launch of a new summer IP programme, focusing on the Latvian language and culture. AFS Latvia is welcoming the first group of participants in 2010. **AFS Finland** brought together no less than 120 volunteers for a training weekend on four tracks of different level, offering something for everyone, from beginning to experienced volunteers in an age range from 20 to 60!

And our partners in **AFS France** are proud to inform us that the 27 French students participating in the Youth Ambassadors programme will leave for a two week stay in Washington D.C. on Sunday 25 October. Promoting social cohesion, this programme brings together secondary school students from four regions in France, from popular urban areas as well as from the country side. As young ambassadors, they will visit institutions and spend time in host communities to share everyday life with an American host family. They will be invited to debate on themes such as cultural diversity, identity and equality of chances.



Youth Ambassadors (photo: AFS VSF/Max Imbert,)

There’s only little to report this month in the field of staff changes in the AFS offices across Europe.

AFS Switzerland introduced Jan Kunz as their new Sending Admission Coordinator for School Programmes. He’s sharing this responsibility with Vero Ursprung, who has just returned from her maternity leave. Carmen Koelliker left AFS Switzerland at the end of October. A special word of thanks goes to Michèle Stauber-Suter who bridged the absence of Vero for a couple of months, bringing in her broad AFS experience.

AFS Italy has announced a few changes in the programme staff, effective as of 1 November. Dario Radi, Support Coordinator, will join the Hosting Department, cooperating

with Diana Maratea in the family finding campaign and the general organisation of the hosting programme. Emanuele Vinci will leave the Hosting Department to move on to the Support area.

That's it for this month. Do let us know what's happening in your offices!

AFS SPAIN INCREASES INTERCULTURAL IMPACT

In every issue of EFILife, we will put the spotlight on one of EFIL's Member Organisations. With the limited space available, focus will be on the organisational structure. This month we give the floor to AFS Spain.



Over the past couple of months, AFS Spain has gone through some changes, and a number of important decisions have been taken by the leadership of the organisation.

A selection process for the position of National Director is ongoing and the appointment of the new Director is expected to happen in December, for him/her to take up the position as from January 2010.

The Team of AFS Spain further designed a new approach for programmes, to be implemented starting this academic year. A new selection process for Spain's sending participants will be started, aiming at facilitating a deeper intercultural learning process through the hosting programme. Hosting a student should be part of the preparation either before or during the sending programme. Reciprocity is not obligatory but AFS ESP will encourage participants and families to host, as a complete rather than unilateral intercultural learning process would be beneficial for all involved. Taking in account the highly competitive market, through our additional educational content we can foster the uniqueness of the programmes

offered by AFS and therefore grow in hosting capacity.

AFS ESP intends to focus on several issues, including improving overall quality of the programmes by increasing the impact of the intercultural learning experience; creating a work group to review the existing materials and develop new ones in order to guide participants and families through the learning process before, during and after the programme; creating a stronger link between sending programmes and hosting programmes with more educational content.

With a new 'old' colleague returning to the AFS ESP team in the position of Organisational Development Coordinator, focus will be on the reinforcement of Spain's volunteer structure in some key areas of Spain. Some tasks will be slightly shifted within the Volunteer Department as special attention will go to School Relations and Fundraising will be outsourced.

120 VOLUNTEERS COME TOGETHER IN FINLAND

A successful training event for volunteers in Finland in the first weekend of November was attended by no less than 120 participants, including two volunteers each from neighbours AFS Denmark and AFS Norway. The organisation of the training weekend was in the capable hands of AFS Finland's very own Pool of Trainers, who ran most of the training workshops throughout the weekend. From the EFIL European Pool of Trainers, Philipp Wagner (Chair of AFS Austria) took upon him a workshop, and delivered an inspiring speech on Sunday morning.

The training was divided into four tracks, aiming at fresh returnees ("where does volunteer work start?"), at active volunteers of all ages ("what is a happy chapter like?"),

at orientation camp leaders (“power of responsibility”), with a fourth track on “volunteerism a hobby or an important part of human life” (taken care of by Sergei Filonovich).



(photo: AFS Finland)

"Energizer" groups including Latin dances, orientation games and experimental learning, were followed by more workshops on local campaigning, creativity and leadership, intercultural learning, and “reality versus virtuality” about the pros and cons of modern media.

Topics on Sunday included "A volunteer without home - find your own place", "Motivate, Inspire and Share", "Re-entry Project" and "Why Innovation needs Courage".



(photo: AFS Finland)

In the closing sessions, groups discussed how they plan to use and share what they have learned during the week-end, while the AFS Finland staff met with the chair and vice-chairs of each chapter at the "Chairpersons' Forum" to discuss operational issues and plan the activities of the coming year.

MULTILINGUALISM PLATFORM LAUNCH

On 23 October the Civil Society Platform to promote Multilingualism has been launched. The event took place in the Albert Borschette Centre of the European Commission (EC) in Brussels. EFIL (Ilyana Panteleev was represent at the official launch. The purpose of the newly established Platform, initiated by the Directorate General Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the EC, is to unite stakeholders and civil society organisations interested in the promotion of multilingualism in the areas of culture, media & non-formal education in Europe.

Very similar to the concept of the Platform of Intercultural Europe, the EC will consult the NGOs who expressed interest to participate and will use the input to design the EU policy on multilingualism in the framework of the ongoing stakeholders dialogue. Together with 30 other organisations, EFIL became a founding member of the Platform and elected its Chair – Mr. Uwe Mohr, the Director of the Language Department in the Goethe Institute in Brussels and a member of the European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC).

The main work of the Platform will take place in four Working Groups. EFIL joined the working group on Education and the one on Linguistic Diversity and Social Inclusion. The focus of the group on Education will be language learning and promoting multilingualism in non-formal education. In the group about Linguistic Diversity and Social Inclusion the main issues will be multilingualism and intercultural dialogue as means of social inclusion and integration of excluded/disadvantaged groups.

Interestingly enough, despite of the nature of the Platform, English was spoken during most of the time at the

launch event, along with some French. However, in informal conversations, participants would freely switch from Spanish to German to Dutch and even Esperanto!

For more information on the event, here is the official press release: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1574&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=es>

For the speech of the Commissioner Orban, go to:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/09/495&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

As next step, a questionnaire is being prepared to be distributed in the networks of the participating NGOs, asking for best practices to promote multilingualism and collecting input on how to fight the existing barriers.

EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM – WHAT’S NEW?



The regular autumn Council of Members (CoMem) and the Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA)

of the European Youth Forum (YFJ) will take place over the weekend of 13-14 Nov 2009 in Torino, Italy. Ilyana Panteleeva is EFIL’s official delegate for the event. The Agenda includes the voting on a resolution on the Statutory Reform of the YFJ with changes that will make the YFJ more transparent, inclusive and efficient in its work and mission to be the voice of young people in Europe. The upcoming CoMem will give members space to discuss and get active on topics of their interest by offering the possibility to organise the so called Thematic Squares. In practice, these are sessions similar to the previous Interest Groups, but more open and flexible in nature. Seeing

this as a good opportunity to connect to like-minded organisations, EFIL and EEE-YFU have presented a joint proposal for a Thematic Square on Recognition of Volunteer Experiences that will take place on the 2nd day of the CoMem. The idea is to gather organisations working on volunteer skills recognition and interested in sharing their experiences and thoughts on the topic. So far, there are many certificates, portfolios and self-assessment tools available that are very different from organisation to organisation. However, there is no commonly accepted tool that gives a formal recognition to the skills and competences volunteers gain during their service abroad. In the session we’ll look into the Europass Mobility, Youthpass and several other instruments and check if there’s enough space for the volunteer skills. With a view of the much expected European Year of Volunteering 2011, the Thematic Square will be a good opportunity to map and mobilize interested YFJ member organisations and look into possibilities for joint projects.

Secondly, a lot of attention lately has gone to the Green Paper on Learning Mobility of Young People: the YFJ is preparing its reaction to it, containing best practices from its member organisations. EFIL has submitted an input outlining the experiences of AFS in promoting mobility and EFIL’s expertise in volunteer development and training to support the quality of the exchanges. You are still invited to submit your input and participate in the EC public consultation by the latest 15 December by e-mail or online. For more information don’t hesitate to contact EFIL.

Last but not least, an interesting pilot has been initiated by the YFJ. EFIL is one of only 6 selected YFJ member organisations (AEGEE, WAGGS, LIJOT, VJR, YEU, EFIL) who are invited to take part in a project called Quality Assurance of Non-

Formal Education (NFE QA). The origin of this project lies in the YFJ Policy Paper on NFE discussing the need for establishing quality mechanisms in youth work in order to validate NFE and raise awareness on the huge impact it has on young people's learning and personal development. The pilot will test a specially designed quality assurance scheme and indicators on a project or programme in each of the 6 organisations and based on the reports and experiences made. It will design a Quality Assurance Framework that will be used commonly by members to ensure the good value of their activities and as a communication and advocacy tool towards external partners. The realization of this project will be a big leap forward to the recognition of the work done by EFIL/AFS and many other youth NGOs in the NFE field. Being in the middle of preparations of the ECTP camp and already thinking of the steps for next year, EFIL decided to pick the ECTP and test the quality assurance mechanism on it. We believe the novelty and definite added value of the ECTP will be a good choice and will provide us with a good basis for improving it and setting a standard for a well-run trimester programme.

21-24 January	Preparatory team meeting Volunteer Summer Summit, Hungary
12-14 February	EFIL Board meeting, Rome, Italy

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Many thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue of EFILife. Please do not hesitate to share with us your [comments and suggestions](#). We welcome your [contributions](#)!

If you would like to subscribe to (or unsubscribe from) this Newsletter, please contact the EFIL Secretariat at: efilife@efil.be.

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To receive further information about EFIL, please check our website <http://efil.afs.org> or contact efil@efil.be.

CALENDAR 2009/10

16-18 Nov.	Steering Group meeting EurAfrican Partnership for Change, Lisbon, Portugal
22-26 Nov	European Citizenship Trimester Programme-End of Stay Camp, Brussels, Belgium
3-6 December	EVS Coordinators Meeting, Leuven, Belgium

