

# EFILife

## Magazine



### European Directors meet in Riga

On Monday 17 October, the Directors of the national AFS offices in Europe, held their Heads of Office meeting (HOO) in Riga. The hotel in the old town of Latvia's capital provided a wonderful setting for the well attended second HOO meeting of 2011. The group welcomed three new colleagues: Caroline Steyaert from AFS Belgium Flanders, Simone Caporali from Intercultura Italy and Pavica Letica from the AFS partner organisation in Croatia. In Riga, the group was bidding farewell to Anett Deaver-Miklos who is leaving AFS Hungary at the end of the year, after 12 years of dedicated service.

For more about the HOO meeting in Riga, [see page 3](#).

### EFIL Calendar

14-18 November Poland (Partner Development)

27 Nov - 1 Dec EFIL European Citizenship Trimester Programme, Brussels Camp, Belgium

5-9 December EFIL Support Staff meeting, Evian, France

5-11 February Youth mobility for Intercultural Competence seminar, Romania

February 2011 Second Feasibility Visit to Romania and Bulgaria

24-26 February EFIL Board meeting, Napoli, Italy

26 Feb - 3 Mar New opportunities for young people through cooperation of youth exchanges and local school communities seminar, Switzerland

16-21 July EFIL Volunteer Summer Summit, Latvia

27 September Intercultural Dialogue Day

4-6 October Third Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchanges, Vienna, Austria

2-6 December EFIL European Citizenship Trimester Programme, Brussels Camp, Belgium

### EFIL

- EFIL Board meets in Prague
- European Directors meet in Riga
- EFIL General Assembly 2013 in Serbia

### EFIL training and projects

- Intercultural Dialogue Day in Izhevsk, Russia
- All eyes on the ECTP Brussels Camp
- A forest venue for our 2012 Volunteer Summer Summit in Latvia
- Seminar Youth Mobility for Intercultural Competence - Romania

Intercultural Dialogue Day in Izhevsk



Focus on Balkans at BFL volunteer week-end

### EFIL Partner News

- Partner news
- Second Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchange
- Cultural weekend in Belgrade
- National volunteer meeting of AFS Netherlands

### EFIL Advocacy

- EFIL contributes to discussions about the future of EU programmes
- The EU-China Year of Youth comes to an end
- Networking meeting - linking the European and national level of advocacy
- Volunteer! Make a difference
- Gifts of time - how volunteers make a difference
- Policy developments in Europe



european  
federation for  
intercultural  
learning aisbl

EFIL - The European Federation for Intercultural Learning  
is the umbrella organisation of AFS organisations in Europe

# EFIL Board meets in Prague

CZECH REPUBLIC

**The EFIL Board met in Prague, 21-23 October 2011, for its last Board meeting of the year.**

The Board members discussed the evaluation of this year's successful Volunteer Summer Summit in Portugal in July, the Intercultural Dialogue Day and the upcoming European Citizenship Trimester Programme Brussels camp. In the overview of EFIL's activities presented by the Secretary-General, special attention was given to the secretariat's increased activities in the field of advocacy. For more information on EFIL's flagship events and advocacy efforts, see elsewhere in this edition of EFILife.

A detailed compilation of the evaluation of EFIL's General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, in June 2011 shows that the event was received well by the participants. For 2013, the Board assigned the organisation of it biennial General Assembly to Interkultura Serbia, the new Partner organisation in South Eastern Europe.

In its discussion on further initiatives of EFIL in the field of new partner development, the Board decided that priority in the Federation's efforts should go to the strengthening of the new Member organisations in South Eastern Europe. Without disregarding the needs of the other Partners in the region, the Board decided to focus on the acceleration of the positive developments in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and help move both organisations to the next professional level by looking for ways to provide them with additional support. It was further pointed out that efforts will be made to better include the organisation in Slovakia in EFIL activities to boost the growth of this new Member organisation.

An increased focus on Poland by EFIL in 2011 has brought promising developments, including increased sending numbers, participation of Polish volunteers in several EFIL activities, the appointment by the Polish partner Foundation of a key office person with a good understanding and motivation for the AFS cause, and the expansion of the programme to schools outside of Krakow, the Foundation's home base. Meanwhile, first feasibility visits by the EFIL secretariat to Romania and Bulgaria have taken place, aimed at making initial contacts with local volunteers, schools and youth organisations, identify potential key people, get a better understanding of the reality of volunteering, gain insight in the local school system and legislative regulations, assess perspectives of sponsorship for future exchanges.

On the future of the European Citizenship Trimester Programme, the EFIL Board decided to support the proposal for a more holistic approach, as recommended by the group of staff and volunteers who met in Brussels in early September for a brainstorming meeting about the programme, and the National Directors of the Member organisations who met in Riga, Latvia, for their second Heads of Office meeting of the year (see elsewhere in

this edition of EFILife). This will include the development of promotional material, learning tools or booklets for participants, host families and schools, as well as training for volunteers.

At its meeting in Prague, the Board defined a process on how to proceed with the new Strategic Plan to be launched in 2013. A working group will be formed to make a first draft of the Strategic Plan, after which a consulting round with the national Boards will follow. At the Regional Meeting in Bangkok, during the AFS World Congress in February 2012, the process will be introduced and discussed with the Boards of the Member organisations.

The Board further discussed the letter it received from the EFIL Election Committee (Sabine Siegrist, Fatma Akgun, Jan Van Keirsbilck) including a set of relevant preliminary questions regarding the 2012 elections for the EFIL Board that will take place at an extra-ordinary General Assembly in June 2012 (place and date still to be decided).

Last but not least, the Board thankfully accepted the proposal presented by Board members Roberto Ruffino and Philipp Wagner on behalf of the Partner organisations in Italy and Austria, to include EFIL as a partner in an annual Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchange, hosted alternately by the Fondazione Intercultura and AFS Austria. The Forum will feature on the EFIL calendar as its fourth flagship project and will put EFIL on the map in the field of ICL research.

The next meeting of the EFIL Board of Directors has been scheduled for February 2012 in Napoli, Italy.

For more information: [paul.claes@afs.org](mailto:paul.claes@afs.org)

Current EFIL Board members:

Christine Leimgruber (Chair) - Switzerland

Jörn Lehmann (Vice-Chair) - Germany

Bart van Doveren (Treasurer) - Belgium Flanders

Mari Dawe (Secretary) - Finland

Roberto Ruffino - Italy

Michael Rosak - Czech Republic

Philipp Wagner - Austria



EFIL Board meets in Prague



# European Directors meet in Riga

LATVIA

On Monday 17 October, the Directors of the national AFS offices in Europe, held their Heads of Office meeting (HOO) in Riga. The hotel in the old town of Latvia's capital provided a wonderful setting for the well attended second HOO meeting of 2011. The group welcomed three new colleagues: Caroline Steyaert from AFS Belgium Flanders, Simone Caporali from Intercultura Italy and Pavica Letica from the AFS partner organisation in Croatia. In Riga, the group was bidding farewell to Anett Deaver-Miklos who is leaving AFS Hungary at the end of the year, after 12 years of dedicated service.

The programme included an update on EFIL's main activities (past and future), with a discussion of the evaluation of the June events in Vienna (HOO meeting and EFIL's biennial General Assembly), the European calendar of activities, an update on new partner development, and an overview of the main advocacy initiatives that EFIL currently is involved in (with focus on the new generation of EU programmes "Education Europe" 2014-2020. A separate session focused on the European Citizenship Trimester Programme, one of EFIL's flagship pro-



European Directors meet in Riga, Latvia

jects which – in its third year – has grown in size and importance, prompting EFIL to discuss with the partners the future concept of the successful programme.

In an interactive afternoon session, working groups discussed various 'hot' topics of interest to the network, including the hosting situation, the flexibility of arrival dates, English versus non-English speaking destinations, the influence of social networking, and the focus of AFS on the educational content of its programmes. Outcomes of the group discussions were shared in a plenary briefing.

Following the HOO meeting, on 18 and 19 October, at the same location an ICL Strategy Devel-

opment Workshop was organised by AFS International, as part of the "Ensuring our Expertise" network-wide strategy, and aiming at the development (or refinement) of the Partner Organisations' own national strategies in the field of intercultural learning.

The next Heads of Office meeting will take place in the spring of next year.

More information: [paul.claes@afs.org](mailto:paul.claes@afs.org)

HOO session in progress, Riga



Anett Deaver-Miklos, with Fatma Akgun (Vienna, EFIL General Assembly)

## EFIL General Assembly 2013 in Serbia

At its meeting in Prague, Czech Republic, in October, the EFIL Board of Directors gladly accepted the candidacy of its Partner organisation in Serbia to host the 2013 EFIL General Assembly. The Board thanks

and congratulates Interkultura Serbia on this initiative and is looking forward to prepare the 2013 meeting together with the young Member organisation in South Eastern Europe.



In 2007, sixteen years after AFS programmes had been suspended following the break-up of Yugoslavia, two students from Serbia were given the opportunity to take part in a year exchange programme with scholarships awarded by Intercultura in Italy. The following year, a group of enthusiastic Serbian returnees from the 1980s, with the assistance of EFIL, officially set up Intercultura with the aim to promote peace and global understanding through student exchanges.

Numbers have been increasing ever since. Scholarships have played an important role in the initial stage of Intercultura. Although Intercultura strives to develop the year programme as their core programme, attention has also gone to the development of short term programmes. Intercultura Serbia had a number of successful class exchanges (with Italy, Turkey and Russia), as well as an EVA programme with Belgium.

Since the very beginning, Intercultura Serbia's priority has been to set up, develop and strengthen the volunteer network. Intercultura volunteers have attended trainings organised by AFS Hungary, AFS Austria/Styria and AFS Denmark, and numerous trainings/study sessions and meetings organized and supported by EFIL.



Apart from formal trainings, one of Intercultura's volunteers gained invaluable experience as an intern at AFS Russia and AFS Latvia in the summer of 2010, and currently a key-volunteer enjoys an internship at the office of AFS Brazil in Rio. Just last month Intercultura Serbia's Director, Ivana Gazikalovic-Pavlovic was invited by AFS Belgium Flanders (and financially supported by EFIL) to attend and give a presentation at the annual BFL volunteer weekend near Brussels, Belgium.

Intercultura volunteers have held numerous presentations at schools, they organized activities to mark EFIL's European-wide Intercultural Dialogue Day over the past years, organized selections, orientations and trainings for new volunteers, as well as teachers' seminars, this way developing good relations with schools.

AFS International has provided the necessary training on network operations and helped establish a branch office in Belgrade, which officially integrated Intercultura Serbia in the world wide AFS network. In June 2011 at EFIL's General Assembly in Vienna, Intercultura Serbia was officially admitted as Affiliate Member in the EFIL network.

For more information on Intercultura Serbia:

[ivana.pavlovic@afs.org](mailto:ivana.pavlovic@afs.org).



## Intercultural Dialogue Day 2011 in Izhevsk, Russia



programmes  
& projects

In the  
previous  
edition  
of

EFILife we had the pleasure to introduce to our readers the winners of the "BEST IDD EVENT 2011 CONTEST". In the next several editions of our newsletters, all EFIL member

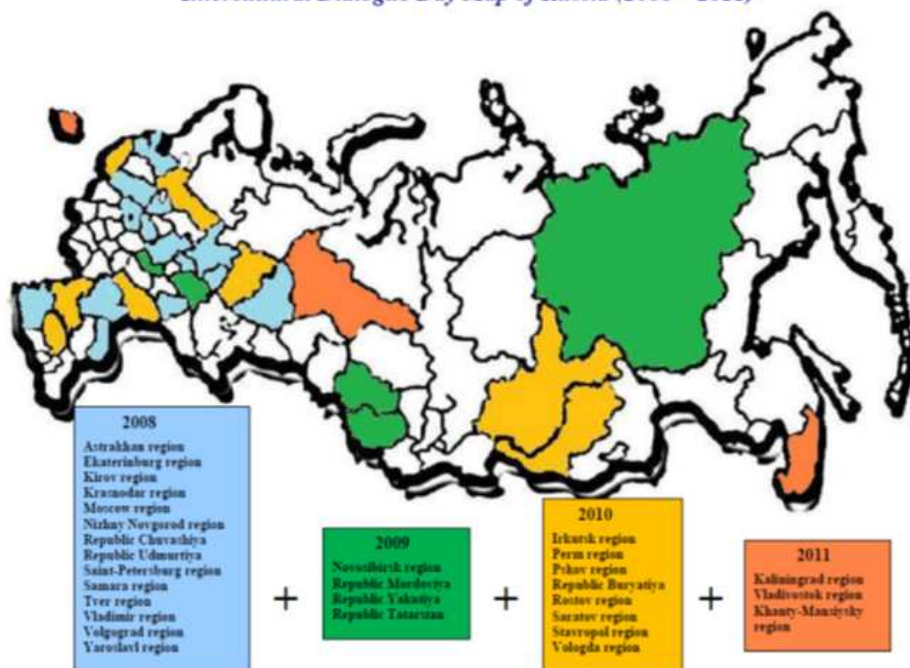
organisations will pass the revue, with stories and pictures of the events they have organized for Intercultural Dialogue Day 2011. For our November issue of EFILife we focus on one of partner organisations that always put a lot of effort in making Intercultural Dialogue Day a huge success, year after year: AFS Russia!



Let's zoom in on one particular location: Izhevsk.



### *Intercultural Dialogue Day Map of Russia (2008 – 2011)*



you?”, “What foreign languages do you speak?” As it turned out, very few people knew that students from France, Italy, Thailand, Germany were staying in Izhevsk!

In a class room of an Izhevsk school, a host student from AFS France addressed her fellow students in Russian and French to tell them about her native city Brest near the Atlantic Ocean and taught them the Joe Dassin song «Et si tu n'existais pas». Additionally, the class communicated through skype with Alina Maklakova, a Russian student who is hosted by Interkultura Serbia, our partner in Serbia, and she told about her life abroad.

In the college foyer video clips were shown to students and visitors, of interviews with people of the city, students and teachers of the college.

A blue September sky... and blue balloons with AFS emblems and greetings in languages from all over the world, are floating slowly in the sky. It's Intercultural Dialogue Day in Izhevsk, Russia, where celebrations lasted 2 weeks! Students engaged in different activities. They designed collages about AFS and Intercultural Dialogue Day, about balloons of

friendship, and about pupils visiting Russia on school exchange programmes. There was a box where students could put a note with a wish to the world. Photos of countries visited by students were collected and were to be published in a newspaper. Interviews with passers-by took place outside the school, on town streets and near large shopping centers. AFS leaflets were handed out. Questions asked included: “What does the concept «Intercultural Dialogue» mean for



To close the day, people representing the local authorities made their speeches.

More info: [elisa.briga@afs.org](mailto:elisa.briga@afs.org)

Help us to create the Intercultural Dialogue Day 2011 booklet as a lasting memory and a recognition of the AFS volunteers' commitment to promote cultural diversity in their communities.

Please send pictures and descriptions of your IDD events to [gizem.bayer@afs.org](mailto:gizem.bayer@afs.org)!

## All eyes on the ECTP Brussels Camp!



The European Parliament

The 2011 European Citizenship Tri-semester Programme (ECTP) is coming to an end, reaching its climax at the Brussels Camp, where for the close to 200 participants

another great experience is waiting when they meet up with their peers from 16 European countries.

This year the preparatory team of ECTP opted for a more interactive approach and through social networks and online surveys on our website, participating students have already been able to get in contact with each other and express their preferences regarding activities offered at the Camp.



The Parliamentarium

Last year participants were able to choose which workshop on Active Citizenship they would attend. Since this format turned out to be a success, this year they will also be able to choose the topic of the workshop on Europe and even the programme of the EU day itself. On 29 November the students will visit Brussels and more in particular the European quarter where they will be able to learn more about the European institutions.

will visit the Parliamentarium, the brand new Visitors Center of the EP offering interactive tools to discover the history, diversity and decision making processes of the EU.

EFIL has arranged for special ECTP hoodie sweaters for each student to face the winter in Brussels and form a real European team! The preparatory team, the workshop trainers and the support teams are working hard for the preparation of the last content and logistical matters and can't wait to welcome on Sunday 27 November the 183 students and walk together with them through this European experience.



Spectacular 2011 ECTP Hoodie sweater

One group will visit the European Parliament and listen to a presentation by an EP officer before the visiting the main semi-circular meeting room, while another group

More information: [elisa.briga@afs.org](mailto:elisa.briga@afs.org)

## Going green. A forest venue for our 2012 Volunteer Summer Summit in Latvia

Here is the first of many updates concerning next year's EFIL Volunteer Summer Summit (VSS 2012) in Latvia. Thanks to the research work done by our partner organisation in Latvia, and after visiting several potential venues, a place has been found to host the biggest AFS network volunteer event of the coming year, the EFIL VSS 2012.

The venue is located close to Jurkalne, a small village in western Latvia right next to the Baltic Sea. It's an idyllic setting. Under pine trees there are small wooden huts distributed on a wide range of territory.

To accommodate the large number of expected participants, next to this central venue, we will use two other locations nearby (about 15

minutes walking distance) that are equally beautiful, one also consisting of small huts which are furnished in a traditional Latvian way, the other one a more modern place with a little more comfort and luxury.



Next to these options there will be a lot of camping spots available, as we want to promote the upcoming Summer Summit as a "back to nature" event. You can pick a spot for your tent and enjoy the magnificent view over the Baltic Sea. Oh yes, and there is a sauna available on the premises.

AFS Latvia and EFIL are looking forward to welcome you all in Latvia in July 2012. Just block the dates in your agendas: 16 (arrivals) to 21 (departures) July 2012.

More information: [inga.menke@afs.org](mailto:inga.menke@afs.org)



# Seminar "Youth mobility for intercultural competence"

## Romania, February 2012

### A CONTEST FOR THE BEST WORKSHOPS...



In the beginning of February 2012, a seminar "Youth mobility for intercultural competence" will be organised in Romania. This seminar is one of the initiatives following EFIL's feasibility visit in September 2011 to Romania and Bulgaria (see EFILife Edition 93 - October 2011). The seminar will focus on new partner development in Romania and Bulgaria

by bringing together volunteers from established member organisations and people from the targeted countries who are willing to contribute to the mid- to long-term goal of creating AFS organisations in Romania and Bulgaria.

The 5-days seminar will mainly tackle the basics for the setting up of new AFS organisations: how to start up and run intercultural exchanges of pupils with AFS; practical simulations of an AFS organisation's activity; volunteer and organisational management; and planning possible future development strategies in the targeted countries. Learning from the experience of the 2009 Training course in Croatia, this

seminar will offer a platform for the sharing of experiences, information and good practices of AFS organisations - both from newly-born and well-established organisations - with the new volunteers in the targeted countries.

For this purpose, **EFIL is launching a CONTEST FOR THE BEST WORKSHOPS** to introduce AFS volunteer work and organisational structure to the new volunteers in Romania and Bulgaria. The workshop should be about: being an AFS volunteer; Intercultural Learning; AFS mission; organisational management and leadership; local and international fundraising; volunteer life cycle and task division; participants' recruitment;

public relations and promotion of the organisation; organisational strategies; etc. The authors of the selected workshops will be invited to do their workshops during the seminar "Youth mobility for intercultural competence" in Romania in February 2012.

You can download the full call for workshops on EFIL website ([http://www.efil.afs.org/news-and-events/article/?article\\_id=1607](http://www.efil.afs.org/news-and-events/article/?article_id=1607)).

The deadline to apply is: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

For more information, please contact Stefania Francescon ([stefania.francescon@afs.org](mailto:stefania.francescon@afs.org)).

Varna, Bulgaria



With volunteers in Iasi, Romania



With EVS volunteers in Iasi, Romania

## 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*

### AFS Czech Republic

As of 7 November 2011 Klara Kutisova has returned after maternity leave to continue in her role as National Director of **AFS Czech Republic**. The current National Director Karolina Puttova will be leading the organisation until the end of 2011 and Klara Kutisova will officially take over from 1 January 2012. Until then, Klara will be working one day a week, getting acquainted with the current situation of the organisation and the actual needs and challenges.

Nükhet Onat and Karolina Puttova at the EFIL General Assembly in Vienna



### AFS Turkey

**AFS Turkey** has reported that after five years of service, Sinan Cilesiz has stepped down as Chair of the board of Directors. He will continue to serve on the board. Under Sinan's leadership AFS Turkey has become financially more sound and stronger than ever and is one of the fastest growing partners in the network. The new Chair of AFS Turkey is Ms. Nükhet Onat who was an AFS student to the US in 1967-68. She has always been an active member of the Turkish national board for the past ten years. She served as Chair of many critical committees in the board and contributed dearly to the development of AFS Turkey.

## AFS Latvia

From **AFS Latvia** comes the news that Ieva Viksna and Karlina-Anna Viksna no longer are staff members, but will continue their cooperation as key-volunteers of the organisation. They started their AFS experience 8 years ago as participants to the US and Italy, after which they became involved with AFS in Latvia, first as volunteers and later, three years ago, as sending and hosting coordinators in the Riga office. Meanwhile, AFS Latvia former employee, Anita Tropa, has returned from her maternity leave and has taken up her duties as Volunteer Coordinator (ODC) as of 1 November.



Ieva and Karlina Viksna, AFS Latvia

## AFS Spain

The National Board of **AFS Spain** has informed the network that Juan Luis Carril Cuesta is no longer the National Director of the organisation. Until a new Director will be appointed, pending issues may be directed to Marcel Krause, Programme Director, who will temporarily assume all functions of the National Director position.

# Second Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchange

## INTERCULTURA ITALY

The Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchange is an event organised by AFS Italy (Intercultura) every other year as a follow up of the Berlin conference of 2008 ("Moving Beyond Mobility"). It is a two-day international session, that brings together some 60 scholars, researchers, practitioners from different countries to share knowledge about topics related to international pupil and student exchanges.



The first Forum took place in October 2009 in the conference centre of Intercultura in Colle Val d'Elsa (Italy). The second Forum has just taken place on October 27th-29th in the same place and it was again prepared in cooperation with Milton Bennett's IDRI (Institute for Intercultural Development Research). Participants came from 9 European countries and North America. The topic was "The other side of the exchange: intercultural learning through hosting".

It is a topic that is often overlooked by researchers and practitioners, as

they focus more on the learning of students. It is also a difficult topic, as host families vary in composition, age, education, social status, internal dynamics - and therefore they cannot be addressed in any simple way. A lecture on adult learning by Columbia University professor Lee Knepfelkamp, a research on host families by Ida Castiglioni and a panel of former host families provided food for thought to 15 discussion groups. Suggestions and conclusions will be published in the Intercultura newsletter.

Professor Bruce La Brack commented: "The second conference was, like



the first, stimulating, informative and very useful. The topic was far more complex and contentious than I had anticipated, but since hosting lies at the heart of the AFS experience it is very important to explore all the implications of doing so."

The Forum will now become an annual event, funded one year by Intercultura and one year by AFS Austria, and it will attract more and more international participants. The next one will be organised by AFS Austria on 4-6 October 2012 in Vienna and it will deal with intercultural learning in the classroom. Intercultura and IDRI will be involved again and EFIL will join in the preparation; following a recent board decision EFIL will include the Forum among its activities, as its fourth flagship project, with the intent of promoting intercultural research in Europe, as well as open discussion between scholars and practitioners.

More information:  
[roberto.ruffino@afs.org](mailto:roberto.ruffino@afs.org)





# Cultural Weekend in Belgrade

## INTERKULTURA SERBIA

The exchange students and their Serbian host siblings spent their mid-term break (3-6 November) exploring the capital Belgrade. They were hosted by local families, which was an excellent way to get potential future host families involved.

The Three Musketeers in 3D on Thursday night was a great kick-off for a fun and educational weekend. On Friday, the students visited the Parliament and, as there was no session, they could take seats of the MP's for a while. The cold but sunny day was perfect for the walking tour of the city centre, the highlight of it being a visit to Kalemegdan fortress and park overlooking the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers. The evening was

understand and everyone enjoyed themselves tremendously.

Saturday was the museum day: at the Nikola Tesla Museum the group was shown a video about the life and achievements of Tesla and saw an impressive number of exhibits. It was lots of fun because there were many hands-on activities with the inventions of the greatest Serbian scientist and inventor. A visit to the Ethnographic Museum which followed was a step back in time. Collections of furniture, clothing and objects used by our ancestors gave the students an insight into the Serbian past.

The weekend ended with Interkultura's third birthday party on Sunday, where the students and host siblings were joined by the host families, volunteers and friends of Interkultura. The weekend was a great success and the volunteers have decided they definitely want to have it on the calendar every year.

More information: Ivana Gazikalovic-Pavlovic  
([ivana.pavlovic@afs.org](mailto:ivana.pavlovic@afs.org))

Interkultura's Party



Outside the Parliament

booked for *Zorba the Greek* musical in one of Belgrade's theatre, a first visit to the theatre ever for some of the students. The students' level of Serbian may not be all that great after only two months in the country, but the universal language of music and dancing was easy to



## National volunteer meeting of AFS Netherlands

### AFS NETHERLANDS

A successful volunteer meeting, with over 40 participants, took place on 29 October in Vinkeveen, not far from the Dutch AFS office. AFS Netherlands, who recently have re-joined the EFIL network, are now

putting particular efforts to strengthen their volunteer network and grow their programmes. Among the workshops offered in the programme there were topics such as AFS in Schools, the use of Social Media and Global Link, building Volunteer Teams and Public Relations for AFS. A separate workshop session was also provided by Izabela Jurczik-Arnold from EFIL, focusing on the introduction of the European Citizenship Trimester Programme to the AFS NED volunteers.

The event enjoyed a variety of volunteer profiles and a very promising positive atmosphere. We are very

much looking forward to seeing our Dutch member organisation grow, with volunteers involved at different levels of AFS and EFIL work!

More information:  
[liesbeth.molenaar@afs.org](mailto:liesbeth.molenaar@afs.org)



## EFIL contributes to discussions about the future of EU programmes



BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

The amazing location of Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, witnessed on the 21-23 October a meeting of the European Youth Forum Expert Group on Youth in Action. Among its five members – representatives of youth organisations – EFIL is represented by Izabela Jurczik-Arnold.

The content of the meeting focused first and foremost on the evaluation and recommendations for the current Youth in Action programme, which will be carried to the EU decision makers. Next to this, most of the group's attention was directed towards the future of youth funding in the 2014-2020 budgeting period of the European Union. Since the risk of down-sizing the programmes targeting youth organisations is very real, the strategies for advocating

young people's needs have been discussed. One of the important issues on the agenda was related to the lobbying involvement of youth organisations at national level in EU Member States, since the next key decisions will be taken there.

As a result of the meeting there will be several concrete measures undertaken by the European Youth Forum with the help of Member Organisations and the Expert Group members. The upcoming weeks and months should bring an increased communication from the YFJ on this topic, which will be also carried by EFIL towards its AFS membership.

Only with the joint effort of the European and national youth

workers we will be able to secure the future of European funding for the youth programmes, so please stay tuned for further calls for action in the near future!

Youth in Action Expert Group at the famous Burning Mountain (Yanar Dagh) in Baku



## EU-China Year of Youth comes to an end



The closing ceremony of the 2011 EU-China Year of Youth took place in Beijing and Tianjin from 20-27 October. EFIL was represented at the Conference by a member of EFIL's European Pool of Representatives (EPOR), Paul Steiner, who had already been involved in activities organized in the frame of the EU-China Year of Youth.



Three volunteers of AFS Germany, including Paul Steiner (representing EFIL) at the closing ceremony of the EU-China Year

The ceremony marked the closing of a year full of events, activities and projects aimed at encouraging intercultural dialogue and better understanding between young people from the EU and China. The closing event brought together around 200 youth representatives from the EU and China. The aim of

the event was to take stock of the achievements of the year and trigger a dialogue on future challenges for young people and EU-China relations.

The young representatives drafted the 'EU China youth leaders Statement'. EFIL, through the presence of Paul Steiner and networking with other exchange organisations, managed to include the need for cultural exchanges in this final declaration. In the Statement it reads that existing exchange programmes should be made more accessible. Moreover, student and youth exchanges among European and Chinese young people should be

strengthened in order to promote a better understanding of cultural diversity and language, also reaching out to local communities and civil society in the hosting countries. Long-term study exchanges between the EU and China should be provided by increasing the number of bilateral university agreements, promoting mobility opportunities, ensuring diploma recognition and providing support programmes, such as the Erasmus programme. Visa for participants of youth and academic exchanges should be free of cost and obtainable with low administrative burden.

The young representatives have also discussed issues as the role of young people in an ageing society and in a fast-changing world, climate change and sustainable development, the role of young entrepreneurs as business leaders of the future and the role of young people in the development of EU-China relations.

Visit to the foreign ministry of china in Beijing. Paul Steiner is the first on right, in the second row from the top.





# Networking meeting in Biel, Switzerland

## Linking the European & National level of Advocacy



BIEL, SWITZERLAND

In Biel, Switzerland, Inga Menke of EFIL attended an idealab on the recognition of competencies that have been acquired through youth exchanges and volunteering.

Following the conference, on 29 October a networking meeting for exchange organisations platforms took place, attended by the European umbrella organisations of AFS (EFIL) and YFU (EEE-YFU), and several national umbrella organisations of exchange organisations: Inter-

mundo (Switzerland), Arbeitskreis gemeinnütziger Jugendaustauschorganisationen (Germany), Stichting Platform Intercultureel Leren (The Netherlands) and Union Nationale des Organisations de Séjours de longue durée (France).

The meeting was designed for the organisations to get to know each other better. Currently there is very little to no communication taking place between these organisations. At the same time the national and

the international level try to lobby partly for the same aspects but on two different levels. The outcome of this meeting was an agreement with participants to increase communication between the platforms and to meet more regularly to improve the lobbying efforts made towards governmental bodies.

More information:  
[inga.menke@afs.org](mailto:inga.menke@afs.org)

## Volunteer! Make a difference



On 2-4 November the 3rd EU-Level Thematic Conference for the European Year of Volunteering 2011 brought together more than 200 participants from all walks of life in the Greek capital, Athens. Purpose of the conference was to open a space for dialogue between different stakeholders to support development of volunteering in Europe, to consolidate recommendations for further work at European and national levels, this way creating a lasting impact for the European Year of Volunteering.

The programme included an opening address by Yiva Tiveus, Director "Citizens" of the Directorate General Communication of the European Commission, a presentation on the "Policy Recommendations: Commission Communication on volunteering & Draft Council Conclusions" by Joachim Ott, Deputy Head of unit "Citizens Policy", Directorate General Communication of the Euro-

pean Commission, and an interview with Ms Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, and Ms Maria Damanaki, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

In an Open Space session on the first conference day, participants were invited to share stories and experiences, addressing the question: "What do I need/want to share or explore now towards getting done what is necessary? What are the most important issues to discuss and take action on to move volunteering forward across Europe?" On the second day, in a World Café setting, participants moved the discussion one step further by addressing the question: "What do we now recommend are the actions taken at either a European or national level to make a difference".

The discussions strongly highlighted in various ways the importance and impact of voluntary activities as well as their added value, but also exposed the existing barriers



Wall report of the proceedings of the first day of the conference ([www.talkanddraw.com](http://www.talkanddraw.com))

[illegible]

The year 2011 has been designated as the European Year of Voluntary Activities promoting Active Citizenship. The European Year gives the European Commission the opportunity to take stock of volunteering in the European Union and its contribution to society. It also allows the Commission to evaluate what the European Union and Member States can do to facilitate and promote volunteering, notably in cross-border situations.

*First of a list of 39 conclusions adopted by the Council of the European Union: "The role of voluntary activities in social policy - Council Conclusions"*

## GIFTS OF TIME

Let' s show how Volunteers make the difference!

By registering the hours of your volunteering work through the application on the website, you can make the difference and help in showing to civil society and policy makers how much volunteering is there in Europe!

EFIL will do its part  
and volunteers at  
ECTP will register  
their GIFTS OF  
TIME!



# Policy developments in Europe

*This compilation is based on information collected by EFIL from the daily newsletter "Europolitics - the European affairs daily" and from the European Youth Forum's "Youth Policy Watch", a bi-weekly bulletin. You can subscribe to the Youth Policy Watch*

## Enlargement

On 12 October the European Commission published its annual progress report, the so-called 2011 "enlargement package", including an assessment of progress made towards EU accession in the Western Balkan countries, Turkey and Iceland. ([http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press\\_corner/key-documents/reports\\_oct\\_2011\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/key-documents/reports_oct_2011_en.htm))

### Serbia and Montenegro a step closer toward EU membership

The European Commission decided to recommend granting Serbia Candidate Status and to open accession talks as soon as the country takes further initiatives to normalise relations with Kosovo, and achieve the agreements of the Stabilisation and Association Process. By upgrading Serbia's status, the Commission wants to acknowledge the progress achieved in democratic reforms and reward Serbia for co-operation with the International Court Tribunal for ex-Yugoslavia (this year the two remaining war criminals, Ratko Mladić and Goran Hadžić, were arrested).

The European Commission also recommended the opening of accession talks with **Montenegro**, as it has successfully met the seven conditions set last year. Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle acknowledged Montenegro's hard work - especially in the areas of judicial reform, revising the electoral law, media freedom, anti-discrimination and the fight against corruption and organised crime - and invited the country to further progress and consolidate the reforms.

Both proposals have now to be approved by the member states later this year.

### Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo

**Albania** and **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, in line with last year report, have been labelled as the sluggish among Western Balkan countries. Though recognising the prolonged political and institutional stalemate of which both states have been suffering, it was pointed out that they have to overcome the current deadlocks and put forward reforms which would allow for progress on the EU integration path. He recommended Albanian political parties to re-engage in dialogue and re-establish cooperation.

Concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina, the fast formation of a state-level government is needed to move forward the reform process and the need was stressed for constitutional reforms "to eliminate ethnic discrimination regarding representation in institutions and adopt a state aid law at the federal level".

Although receiving more favourable review than its neighbours, **Kosovo** was criticised for its slow progress in reforms due to the long election process this year. Organised crime and corruption, the strengthening of public administration and the implementation of judicial reform remain the main challenges, along with the normalisation of relationships with Serbia.

### Iceland

Negotiations with Iceland have had a good start and are progressing well. Since Iceland is a member of both the Schengen area and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Iceland and the EU already share many policies, a lot of legislation, and economies are well integrated. The country is not expected to face serious legislative obstacles in at least two-thirds of the 29 remaining chapters (out of 33), even though a more demanding phase of the negotiations is starting with sensitive issues as fisheries, agriculture, food safety and environment.

## Youth

### European Commission's plans for concrete actions to recognise and promote volunteering at EU level

(<http://europa.eu/volunteering/en/content/commission-adopts-communication-eu-policies-and-volunteering>)

To ensure a long-term follow-up to the 2011 European Year of Volunteering and continue dialogue with the relevant stakeholders, the Commission defined a range of measures that will help foster voluntary activities in the EU, in particular across borders. The "Communication on EU Policies and Volunteering: Recognising and Promoting Cross-border Voluntary Activities in the EU", issued on 20 September, list concrete initiatives in the different policy areas related to volunteering such as:

- the creation of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps in 2012, to address the area where Europeans consider that volunteers play the most important role: in the field of solidarity and humanitarian aid work;
- the issue of a European Skills Passport where individuals can keep a record of the skills and competences they acquire through volunteering, thus validating non-formal and informal learning;
- the forthcoming European Year of Citizens (2013) will be given an appropriate volunteering dimension, promoting especially crossborder volunteering;
- EU funding programmes in different policy areas will further target volunteers and promote cross-border volunteering;
- further proposals to include volunteering in the EU's employment strategy, in its fight against poverty and social exclusion and in the context of the Commission's "New Skills for New Jobs" initiative.

## The conclusion of the EU-China Year of Youth 2011



Youth and youth organisations have received an historical recognition as key actors to promote EU-China relation. This year has been an important occasion to put European and Chinese young people and youth related issues at the centre of the attention and dialogue. From 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October 2011, 200 youth representatives from the EU and China were gathered in Beijing for the 7<sup>th</sup> and last flagship event of the 2011 EU-China Year of Youth.

For more information, see the article on page 10.

### EU-China cooperation: “People-to-people” dialogue on education, culture, youth, research and multilingualism

After the already existing “High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue” and “High-Level Strategic Dialogue” pillars, the EU-China cooperation has gained a new pillar. The “people-to-people” dialogue has to be launched by the end of 2012 and address the fields of education, culture, youth, research and multilingualism. This will open up space for dialogue on a very wide range of issues, bringing real benefits to both European and Chinese citizens, said Androulla Vassiliou (Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth Commissioner).

This cooperation should take to the establishment of an EU-China Higher Education Council and joint scholarship schemes to provide more opportunities for EU and Chinese students and teachers to study in each other's institutions.

### “It is money for our young people...” said Barroso on the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020

For the first time in the history, the European Parliament hosted a conference on the Union Budget on 20 and 21 October, with the presence of several EU key figures. During his speech at the first plenary session, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso focused on Europe 2020 and stressed the relevance of investing on youth: “It is money for our young people who cannot find work. Money for our researchers and innovators to bring their ideas to market. Money for our SMEs and entrepreneurs to do business across our continent more easily”.

However, the future of EU investments into youth still has to be set and youth organisations are working to obtain recognition and support in the post-2014 EU Budget.

### Conference of the EU ministers in charge of compulsory education: education for mobility priority

On 10-11 October a conference was held in Gdańsk (Poland) with the EU ministers in charge of education and few representatives of the European Commission. This meeting addressed issues in line with the priority of Polish Presidency in the field of education such as education for mobility. Participants discussed the role and importance of language competences in the perspective of lifelong learning and future employment. Indeed, these competences are crucial for economic growth and competitiveness, but also on a personal level, increasing personal mobility to study or work and must be developed already from the earliest stage of education.

A large part of the session was dedicated to the exchange of experience and examples of national solutions on the education system diversity leading to acquisition of the best achievements in gaining knowledge, skills and competences.

### ESN Survey 2011 - Exchange, Employment and Added Value

The European Student Network is conducting a survey to investigate the impact of living, working, and studying abroad on employability and attitudes towards the European labour market, environment and volunteering. This survey targets any current or former student at a higher education institution and it is open until the end of November. (<http://www.esn.org/survey>)

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