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COUNTDOWN TO INTERCULTURAL  
 DIALOGUE DAY  
 24 SEPTEMBER 2009

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*Even the local truck drivers get prepared for the EFIL Volunteer Summer Summit 2009 in Turkey (see registration plate) (photo:AFS Turkey)*



What do Brescia, Ekaterinburg, Marseille, Burgos, Szekesfehervar, Brno, Salzburg, Tabua, Kauhajoki and Izmir have in common...? They all took part in Intercultural Dialogue Day 2008, as did some 300 other cities all over Europe!

In just over two months, we will celebrate once again our **Intercultural Dialogue Day** all over the continent! Thursday 24 September 2009 is this year's D-Day, and we hope to see at least as many locations as last year joining in, to turn this event into a huge success. This year's theme is "Intercultural Europe in 5 senses". This is our chance to focus the eyes of Europe on what we truly believe in: the intercultural learning experience of youth exchanges, as a way to improve this world and make it a better place.

A document with hints on "How to Make it Work" regarding the preparation of the local events, has been sent out to all Coordinators. For further ideas, the booklet on the 2008 Intercultural Dialogue Day can be downloaded from the EFIL website ([http://efil.afs.org/efi\\_en/view/2957](http://efil.afs.org/efi_en/view/2957)). Last year EFIL produced the DVD "Snapshots: When Cultures Interact". 24 September 2009 will be a good opportunity to make the best possible use of the videos.

On 3 August a Volunteer Coordinators Meeting will take place as one of the workshops of the

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Volunteer Summer Summit in Turkey. Prior to 24 September, EFIL will issue an official press release which will ensure greater visibility of the events with the wider public through various relevant media channels. Media partners can play an essential role in our strategy to put the AFS intercultural programmes and more in general student exchanges and intercultural learning, under the spotlight.

Let's make our Intercultural Dialogue Day 2009 an even bigger success than last year's!




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**READY FOR  
EFIL VOLUNTEER SUMMER SUMMIT 2009**

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Preparations are stepping up a few gears as the second EFIL Volunteer Summer Summit 2009 on Innovation and Creativity in Youth Exchanges is just days away! After the online registration of participants for the workshop, everything in Istanbul is in place to receive over 200 people between 30 July and 4 August. The programme of the Summer Summit contains many interesting workshops led by AFS Volunteers. It also includes a big Turkish bazaar to exchange information and AFS gadgets, and a dance night. For those who are in for a relaxing time under the Turkish sun, several leisure activities have been added, such as a face massage or Brazilian Samba dance classes.

In the spirit of last year's community project with the village of Vigy (remember the mural and the children books), we will be visiting the neighbouring village of

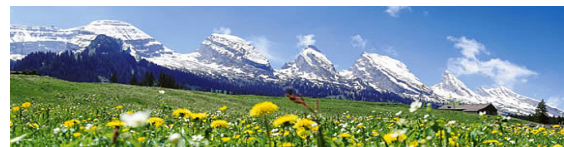
Polonezkoy, where the community is constructing a new Children's Protection Center (Orphanage) which will open in September 2009. So this year, as our Community Service Project, we are asking all participants of the Summer Summit to bring toys. This way we are planning to create an intercultural playground in the new orphanage!

Everybody in the team preparing for this year's Summer Summit is looking forward to four days full of AFS spirit and they can't wait to meet all of you there! For more detailed information please check [www.efilsummersummit.org](http://www.efilsummersummit.org)

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**EFIL BOARD MEETS IN SWITZERLAND**

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Wildhaus, Switzerland, was the venue of EFIL's second Board meeting in 2009, which took place on 19-20 June, alongside the annual Alpine meeting of five of EFIL's Member Organisations.



*EFIL Board (photo:EFIL)*

Mandates of the EFIL Board for the year to come were fixed as follows: Chair of the Board - Roberto Ruffino, Vice-Chair - Christine Leimgruber, Treasurer - Martha Eiriksdottir, Secretary - Anett Miklos. Additionally, for relevant domains of activities within EFIL, an advisory role

has been assigned to individual Board Members: political issues – Mari Pajunen, training activities – Michael Rosak, programme development – Anett Miklos, fundraising – Christine Leimgruber, partner development – Mete Fanuscu, and intercultural learning – Roberto Ruffino.

The Board stressed that it's important to closely monitor and solidify what we successfully built up over the past years in terms of growing financial sustainability, increased visibility and credibility within Europe through successful large scale activities (Volunteer Summer Summit, Intercultural Dialogue Day, European Citizenship Trimester Programme), as well as trainings, and further concentrate on ambitious priorities and new challenges, including the network's need for growth in programme development, and the need to look into options to expand EFIL's geographical scope within the European Union.

Among others, topics on the agenda further included an update on developments in Europe and within EFIL (with focus on the European Commission's new Comenius Programme, the Community Code on Visas, the new Trimester Programme), a reflection on the General Assembly, new member development, etc.

The next meeting of the EFIL Board of Directors will take place in September.

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#### **FIRST SERBIAN STUDENTS GOING ON AFS EXCHANGE**

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*By Johannes Schirrmeister, AFS Hungary*

On 20-21 June, the first generation of students going abroad with Interkultura Serbia met in Belgrade in preparation of their upcoming AFS exchange year. The pre-departure orientation was organized by a group of motivated Serbian and Bosnian

young volunteers. In sessions focusing on self-reflection, our social environment, communication and differences between cultures, they were preparing for a successful exchange year.

The Serbian and Bosnian volunteers themselves were prepared for their tasks through a training under the mentorship programme for the new organisations in the Balkans, that links AFS Hungary with Interkultura Serbia. Next to very practical information on activities for students going abroad, the sessions conducted by Budapest based FSJ volunteer Johannes Schirrmeister and Hungarian volunteer Lili Popper also touched on more general topics related to orientations such as facilitating and evaluating orientation activities and creating a diversified programme for a camp.



The seven Serbian students are going for their AFS experience to Germany, Austria, Italy, and Switzerland. Interkultura Serbia was officially established in October 2008 and has been cooperating with EFIL and the AFS partners over the past years, within the scope of EFIL's partner development efforts.

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#### **YOUTH AMBASSADORS MEET SECRETARY OF STATE IN FRANCE**

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In AFS France, the second edition of the Youth Ambassadors programme is well on the way, with the selection of 27 high school students (out of 316

applicants) from four different regions, mostly suburbs and rural areas, embodying French cultural diversity, all of them students with a strong involvement in their community. They will spend 15 days in the USA (24 October to 9 November 2009), in Washington DC and other cities, where they will live with a host family, go to a local school, visit NGOs, participate in discussions, etc. After returning home they will develop a project related to their stay in the USA that benefits their community.



Youth Ambassadors programme AFS France  
(photo: AFS VSF)

An orientation camp for the Youth Ambassadors was held in Paris from 9-12 July. AFS France and the 27 selected kids, met with Ms. Fadela Amara, French State Secretary in charge of urban policy. Ms. Fadela Amara is well known in France for her commitment to fight violence targeting young women in suburban areas. She herself comes from a suburban area and is committed to the bettering of social and economical conditions in these areas. The Youth Ambassadors programme is partly funded by her Secretary (via the French National Agency for Social Cohesion and Chance Equity) in addition to the sponsoring by the American State Department (via the American Embassy in Paris).

During the meeting, Michel Antoine (AFS France Board member) presented the activities of AFS in France, after which Ms. Amara attended a workshop and had a lively

talk with the new Youth Ambassadors. Part of the workshop focused on diversity issues as the participants represent a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. Ms. Amara urged them to be “ambassadors of their own life” and announced that she would like to meet with them again when they return from the States.



Fadela Amara surrounded by some of the Youth Ambassadors (photo: AFS VSF)

For pictures of the event please follow the link: <http://maximbert.com/photo/afs-ambassadeurs09> (photos: AFS VSF). For more information, contact [caroline.barjon@afs.org](mailto:caroline.barjon@afs.org).

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#### PARTNER NEWS

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*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 Belgium Flanders** is happy to announce that their selection round in June has delivered excellent results, with a new National Director and a new Organisational Development Coordinator. Marcel Kerff's first working day in the office in Mechelen will be 4 August. He has a long track record as a director of several non-profit organisations. The new ODC, Liesbet Vanmechelen, will start on 23 September.



Marcel Kerff (photo: AFS BFL)

**AFS Czech Republic** has a new Hosting Coordinator. After two years in the Prague office, Martina Krupkova leaves for Chile, and Monika Janovska, a 1994/95 returnee from the US, takes over. **AFS Austria** too has announced a change in the Hosting Coordinator position, with Philippa Stockert moving to Portugal. Her last day in the office was 10 July. Sophie Ehrlich is the new Hosting Coordinator. She already joined the team of AFS Austria in late June, making the transition as smooth as possible.

In **AFS Spain**, the Organisational Development Coordinator has left the office after six months of service. A new ODC will soon be appointed. Karina Boggio, Hosting Coordinator of AFS Spain, left on 15 July. Until a new coordinator is assigned, Manuel Benitez will take care of visa related issues and Montse Torrecilla will take care of Hosting and Student Support. **AFS France** hired the services of an intern, Cinta Chevignard, to support the office in Paris with the second edition of the Youth Ambassadors programme (see above).

In **AFS Germany**, due to the Weltwaerts programme and other initiatives, the 18+ team needed to expand its staff capacity. The team welcomes back Sylvia Linneberg, after her maternity leave and an interim

assignment as Director of Sending Support. New on the team are Anne Lise Thomsen (admission and orientation procedures), Ilka Schmidt (coordination tasks for 18+ programmes to Thailand, Philippines, China), Mariana Medina (3-month summer intern). Still with the team for another month is Anne Reck, one of the key-volunteers (support in pre-departure orientations).



18+ Team AFS GER: Karen, Margaret, Philipp, Maren, Sylvia, Anne, Michael, Julia, Ilka, Anne Lise, Mariana (photo: AFS GER)

Last but not least, **AFS Russia** has held their General Assembly, and elected a new Chair, Aleksander Galitskikh, a Vice-Chair (responsible for international relations), Ekaterina Bagdasarova, and five Board members.

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

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**"BE HEALTHY, BE YOURSELF"**

**CONFERENCE ABOUT THE HEALTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

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The 1<sup>st</sup> Youth Health Conference took place from 8-10 July in Brussels under the motto "Be healthy, be yourself". The high level conference gathered around 150 young people and a number of EC officials to discuss the EU health strategy and

offer young people a space to express their views and needs regarding their own health.

The European Youth Forum's specially designated Youth Camp preceding the conference, brought together the youth delegates in 8 different working groups and workshops to talk about various topics and help them prepare statements to be voiced during this unique Youth Health event. It became clear that young people DO care about health and need to be part of the decision and policy making process. Health is a topic that interests them even if their young age might not seem to match with the seriousness of the subject, said youth delegates during the meeting. Oftentimes, young people think of health post factum, when they are ill, or rather later on during adulthood, since adolescence is perceived as the time of being invincible and free, when everything is possible.

Young people have never had better health before, however, the cases of alcohol and drugs abuse, as well as risky sexual behaviour are alarming and endanger the ability of young people to lead a healthy life and make responsible choices, said Commissioner for Health Androulla Vassiliou – patron of the conference.

A lot of young & fresh ideas came out of the workshops and will be taken on board by the Commission. In "Communicating Health" the participants were discussing efficient ways of TV and online campaigning about safe sex, tobacco use as well as the influence of media & advertising on alcohol consumption among young people. In the working group "No Limits" the question was how to deal with risks and take the necessary precautions in order to prevent health trouble. Education & raising awareness are held key to improving the health and wellbeing of young people – how can schools engage in passing on the message and informing

young people about the risks of alcohol abuse, addictions and sexually transmitted diseases?

The impact of non-formal education and youth work, on the other hand, was recognized as central by the participants in the Conference for the promotion of health and risk-free behaviour among young people.

With this respect, it was rewarding to see that EFIL/AFS is on the right track when looking also for the intercultural embedding of some everyday conflicts because of different health perceptions, hygiene and other lifestyle practices of young people. It was particularly stressed that youngsters put in an unknown environment can become quite vulnerable and insecure and thus, peer support is crucial to prevent negative experiences and abuses.

The event was accompanied by an Art Competition. In the course of the preparation for the conference, young people from Europe aged 15-25 submitted photos, drawings and videos and got the chance to share their innovative interpretation of health and wellbeing. Five of them were awarded by Commissioner Vassiliou during a special reception on 9 July.

For more information and materials on the topic and to see the winning works, visit the Youth Health Initiative blog: [http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/youth/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/youth/index_en.htm) ! Meet other young health enthusiasts and let the European Commission and the Youth Forum know what you think – the debate is still running!

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#### AVSO SEMINAR ON INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

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*Text and Photos by Lara Hagen, AFS Austria*

A small group of people from all over Europe, working with volunteers, came together in Brussels (8-11 June

2009) to brainstorm about Intercultural Dialogue, culture shock and how to cope with it. The people from AVSO (Association of Voluntary Service Organisations) had put together an interesting programme, with discussions, games and different case studies.



Because we only were about 10-15 participants, everyone had the opportunity to speak up, and join in the discussions, which made the topics interesting, including a lot of different opinions and experiences. Paolo from UN Volunteers contributed a lot by talking about his own experiences and brought interesting details into the debates about culture shock and how to deal with it. Yuri from Hungary explained how his organisation was dealing with the Roma people in Hungary. Yuri demonstrated typical dances, and confronted the group with stereotypes that people have about Roma people. Many participants were unfamiliar with the Roma situation, so talking about them and their problems was in many ways an eye-opener to a new culture. Especially talking about stereotypes turned out to be an interesting topic, as it made the group realise that being tolerant and open is important when dealing with different cultures.

Discussions were held on how to prepare volunteers who want to go



abroad, different educational games were demonstrated. Being exposed to quite some new information, the participants went home with the intention to use a lot of the newly gained knowledge in their AFS work, e.g. by passing on their seminar learnings to other volunteers.

To learn about interesting events or seminars, keep an eye on EFIL's regular calls for participants!

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### HOW "YOUNG" WAS THE CZECH EU PRESIDENCY?

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The Czech EU Presidency is now over – let's take a look back at the 2 major events that happened during these 6 months and were directly linked to youth policy:

#### European Conference on Youth: Mobility of Young Volunteers across Europe

With the aim to review the "Council Recommendation Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU" and to promote volunteering at all levels and beyond the spheres of the non-profit sector, this conference took place in the Prague spring on 12-13 March 2009. The 125 participants, among whom many youths too, were representatives of different sectors (business, politics, education, non-profit, volunteering, government bodies) from 29 countries who came together to discuss how to make cross-border volunteering (CBV) more accessible, appealing and efficient for young people disrespected of their background. It was agreed that 2011 European Year of Volunteering (EYV) should definitely be used to trigger and inspire the mobility of young volunteers and to focus on the recognition of their learning achievements and skills. A key message of one of the workshops was the lack of recognition of volunteering both by the formal education sector and employers and within society at large. The

Conference concluded that there are barriers to volunteering such as visa regulations that have to be dealt with internally by national laws. Moreover, it was highlighted that in order to make CBV a great learning and positive experience for young people across Europe, there has to be adequate support for volunteers. Among else, this could be achieved through Support Centres, ex-volunteers structures and proper training and capacity building for providers of volunteer opportunities.

The European Conference on Youth 2009 was definitely a confirmation of the value of volunteering and the willingness of all stakeholders to promote it as a good way of civic participation and solidarity among young people. An excellent initiative of the Czech EU Presidency and the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, which will hopefully pave the way for a broader public debate on this topic in the months to come. Stay tuned for more news on EFIL's engagement in EYV 2011!

### Youth Event

As a tradition, in the course of each country's EU presidency, there is always a Youth Event to put young people and their voice in EU policy-making in the spotlight. The Czech Youth Event inspired by the presidency's motto "Europe without barriers" took place in Prague, and 2-5 June 2009 was the perfect timing for this international conference, following the Commission's Communication on the "New Framework of Co-operation in the Youth Field" published on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

The main outcomes of the working groups sent the following message: young people welcome the new strategy on youth, but disapprove of the missing concrete methods of implementation of the principles lying therein. In other words, as stated in the European Youth Forum's (YFJ) reaction to the strategy, the document fails to provide the explicit

mechanisms that should make the vision work. In the long-term, young people's empowerment for participation is the key to realising the objectives of the policy framework. This statement has been voiced again and again throughout the whole Youth Event and is hoped to be reflected upon in the finalising of the new framework for co-operation that is due in November 2009 during the Swedish EU Presidency.

The participants could furthermore enjoy Bambiriáda – the annual traditional festival of youth activities in the Czech Republic and an open space for Czech youth centres and children & youth organisations to present themselves and their work.

More about the 2 initiatives as well as photo material from the beautiful Czech capital is still to be found on the internet: [www.ye2009.cz](http://www.ye2009.cz)

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### FAREWELL TO BENJAMIN LEDWON

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*Ben and some of the staff and volunteers of EFIL  
(photo: EFIL)*

End of August last year, Benjamin Ledwon, a young guy, 19 years of age, coming from Strausberg near Berlin, where he finished school in June, joined the international EFIL team in Brussels as our first ever FSJ volunteer (Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr, German social service).

Having Ben with us for almost a full year, has been a wonderful experience for EFIL. Ben fitted in perfectly alright, becoming everyone's



favourite in the office, a treatment he undoubtedly enjoyed (and will miss!).

Among other things, Ben took care of our monthly EFILife newsletter with a great sense of responsibility, urging us all to have the articles ready in time. He improved our website, regularly updating it with the latest news. He scanned the daily Europolitics newsletter for relevant articles that could be of interest to the network. The new design and layout of EFIL's Biennial Report 2007-2008 was Ben's work too. Ben worked closely together with Izabela, EFIL's Training Coordinator, and played a particularly large part in the preparations for the training for the national pools of trainers in Brussels end of 2008, and the Zagreb training last April about organisational development.

We wish Ben the best of luck in his further adventures, starting with his upcoming studies at the University of Exeter in the UK.

EFIL is looking forward to work with Alexander Müller, who will join us in August as our new FSJ volunteer!

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#### INTERNET LINKS

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- [www.ye2009.cz](http://www.ye2009.cz)
- [http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/youth/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/youth/index_en.htm)
- [www.efilsummersummit.org](http://www.efilsummersummit.org)

Note that there will be no EFILife edition in the month of August.

Have a great holiday break!

Rendez-vous in September!

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#### EFIL CALENDAR

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20-22 July	Prep Meeting European
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	Citizenship Trimester Programme
26 July-02 Aug	EPOT Training Course, Turkey
30 July-04 Aug	EFIL Volunteer Summer Summit on Innovation and Creativity in Youth Exchange, Istanbul, Turkey
13-14 Sep	Training Advisory Body Meeting, Budapest, Hungary
18-20 September	EFIL Board meeting, place to be decided
24 September	Intercultural Dialogue Day 2009
06-10 October	EFIL Meeting for Support Staff
19 October	Heads of Office meeting, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
20-25 October	AFS World Congress, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
22-26 Nov	European Citizenship Trimester Programme-End of Stay Camp, Brussels, Belgium
3-6 December	EVS Coordinators Meeting, Leuven, Belgium

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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](mailto:efilife@efil.be).

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