

EFILife

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AFS EuroNet steering group

EFIL Calendar

21-25 March 2011	EFIL Programme Directors meeting, Maribor, Slovenia
20-26 March 2011	Fundraising Seminar, Brussels, Belgium
5 May 2011	AFS EuroNet Group dinner, Brussels, Belgium
1-2 June 2011	EFIL Heads of Office (HOO) meeting, Vienna, Austria
2-5 June 2011	EFIL General Assembly, Vienna, Austria
5-6 June 2011	EFIL Board meeting, Vienna, Austria
15-21 July 2011	EFIL Training for Trainers, Zmar, Portugal
20-25 July 2011	EFIL Volunteer Summer Summit, Portugal
29 September 2011	Intercultural Dialogue Day 2011
27 Nov – 1 Dec	EFIL European Citizenship Trimester Programme Brussels Camp, Belgium



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

EFIL Volunteer Summer Summit 2011 - Now it's your turn for action!

ZAMBUJEIRA DO MAR - PORTUGAL



The Preparatory Team is proud to announce that the official webpage of the EFIL Volunteer Summer Summit 2011 is now online! You can find a lot of useful information about conditions, deadlines, procedure, fees, host

country, etc. Check out pictures of the venue and lodgings. Don't forget to join our community on Facebook (use a link from the webpage). There you can ask questions, discuss relevant topics, find friends and have a look at more pictures of the venue and surroundings.

The preparation of the VSS 2011 is moving forward. If you are an AFS volunteer, then now is your turn to step up! Fill in the application form on www.efilsummersummit.org -> My Summit. It will take you just a couple of minutes to fill in the form. Your national AFS organisation will have to confirm your application as an AFS volunteer. After the confirmation email, you will be able to start the registration. The application procedure will be available until 15th of May.

You may have noticed that participation fees this year



are higher than in previous years. The Preparatory Team is making a big effort to decrease the rates by looking for corporate and individual sponsors. We encourage AFS offices and chapters too to do local fundraising in order to make participation more affordable for more of their volunteers. For this purpose, the Preparatory Team can provide you with information and a kit for potential sponsors. There is also an opportunity to make an individual donation. You can find all information on the webpage. We appreciate your understanding and help.

Meanwhile, the Preparatory Team has put together the teams that will make the Summit in Portugal the best ever. A group of caring, attentive and energized people from Portugal have been selected for **the VSS Support Team**; and a team of inspiring, professional and creative trainers from the AFS network have been selected for **the Trainers Team** to prepare the best quality workshops and support. You will have an opportunity to get to know the VSS teams better in the 3rd and 4th VSS Herald. Don't miss your favourite VSS magazine. The **3rd edition will come out on 31 March.**

European Citizenship Trimester Programme entering its third year

BRUSSELS - BELGIUM



At the end of November 2011 EFIL will be organising the 3rd edition of the Brussels Camp for participants of the European Citizenship Trimester Programme across Europe. The preparations for the Camp have started – dates have been confirmed,

the venue is booked, and participants are being recruited by volunteers and AFS organisations at national level. So far, based on tentative numbers communicated to EFIL by the Member Organisations, we are counting more than 200 young people for the trimester exchange starting end of August!

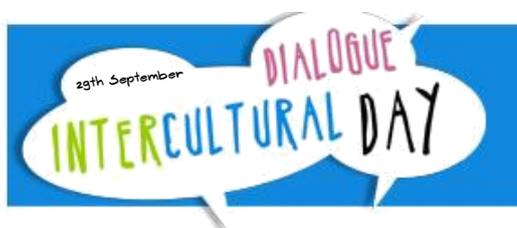
You are invited to check out the Facebook group and the website www.ectp2010.eu and enjoy some pictures of the (always) unforgettable camp days! At last year's Camp, EFIL collected video material of the priceless moments throughout the days of hard work and fun. We are currently preparing an ECTP promotional video with the material we have from 2010 – including footage of the great Volunteer Team who made the Camp possible last year as well as the participants are coming from all across Europe. The video will be made available online and to your national AFS organisations.

A Call for the ECTP 2011 Preparatory Team will come out soon. Stay tuned, and if you enjoy being part of a big event in a multicultural environment, then do apply to be a volunteer at the camp, or a trainer, or a preparatory team member!



4th edition of Intercultural Dialogue Day

THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2011



Just over six months from now, on Thursday 29 September, the AFS network across Europe will celebrate its fourth Intercultural Dialogue Day (IDD). Volunteers all over the continent will soon start preparations for IDD workshops on the big day, when AFS chapters in no less than 26 partner organisations across the

continent will once again make a joint effort to set up all kinds of activities including creativity workshops, youth debates, panel discussion, concerts, school activities, movie screenings, street entertainment, competitions, markets, etc.

Following the success of the first three editions – 2008, 2009 and 2010 - the ultimate goal for IDD2011 is to include as many chapters and locations across Europe as possible. Wouldn't it be great if volunteers in every chapter in 26 countries in Europe were to be involved somehow in the celebration of intercultural dialogue on 29 September 2011? Volunteers all over Europe, make 29 September, Intercultural Dialogue Day 2011, YOUR day!



France 2009



Russia 2010



Turkey 2010



Belgium 2009

EFIL Study Session on host family support

STRASBOURG - FRANCE

In February, 29 highly motivated AFS volunteers from 17 countries met in Strasbourg, France, for a week of sessions and workshops about their experiences in host family support with a focus on the aspects of intercultural and intergenerational learning. The event was hosted by the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg which is a most suitable and greatly equipped venue for

EFIL's study sessions.

The programme was challenging and riddled with opportunities to discover what is possible and how it can be reached. According to many participants, among the most favourite topics of the agenda –was the international market for which all represented countries designed posters and brought promotional materials to present and

share with the others.

After spending a couple of nice hours in Strasbourg city center on Thursday (including a typical and delicious “tarte flambée”), it was time to put the acquired knowledge into practice and develop specific projects to improve host family



support, taking into consideration what had been taught during the study sessions. Small groups worked on self-chosen

subjects supported by a framework provided by the preparatory team.

A great mix of backgrounds and experiences made the event rich in perspectives and ideas. A big appreciation goes to the preparatory team for the efforts done to turn this study session into a rewarding event for all present. The participants of the study session were well-chosen by their sending organisations, since their expertise was the most important basis for the seminar discussions and outcomes. And finally, the support of the Youth Centre of the Council of Europe has once again been much appreciated.



Russia's contribution to the hosting market



All together on the roof of the Youth Centre

EFIL Board meets in Milan

MILAN - ITALY

The EFIL Board held its first in-person meeting of the year in Milan, Italy, 18-20 February. The agenda featured a wide range of topics.

An overview was given by the Secretary-General on recent developments in EFIL and Europe, with a special focus on EFIL's flagship projects: the Volunteers Summer Summit (VSS) in July in Portugal, the European Citizenship Trimester Programme (ECTP) with the Brussels Camp at the end of November, and the Intercultural Dialogue Day on 29 September 2011. You can read more about these events elsewhere in this edition of EFILife.

As a new item on the agenda, the Board took a close look at the situation in the European network, with focus on the performance of the EFIL Member Organisations. EFIL sees it as its responsi-



bility to encourage managers to communicate and share knowledge, experience and best practices.

In December 2010, an EFIL communication audit was done by an external consultant. Tasks included an assessment of EFIL's brand and of the current communication performance and ca-

capacity, the identification of areas for improvement, and specific recommendations. The Board has discussed the consultant's report. Following this, a communication strategy will be worked out, and goals for marketing and communication will be defined. In the next phase different EFIL activities will be grouped as sub-brands, and tools will be developed or put in line with EFIL's new corporate identity.

Good progress has been made in the preparation of the EFIL General Assembly, to take place in June in Vienna, Austria. The Board took time to discuss the Business Plan and the draft budgets for 2011-2012, as well as the first draft of the Biennial Report 2009-2010. More infor-

mation on the General Assembly and the elections for the EFIL Board can be found elsewhere in this EFILife edition.

At the meeting it was confirmed that EFIL has received applications for membership from six organisations. "Stichting AFS Nederland" has sent an official request to join EFIL. The new organisations in South Eastern Europe and Slovakia have applied for Affiliate Membership status: "AFS

Intercultural Programs Croatia", "Interkulturni susreti u Bosni i Hercegovini" (UG ISU BIH), "Educational Association Interkultura" (Slovenia), "Interkultura Serbia" and "Interkultura Slovakia".

Following a limited call for financial support to allow the new organisations in South Eastern Europe to take full advantage of EFIL activities in 2011, the Board was happy to note that several partners have

contributed generously to a special budget that will allow representatives of those organisations to attend major EFIL events in 2011, including the General Assembly in Vienna. The EFIL Board wants to extend its appreciation and thanks to the AFS organisations in Denmark, Austria, Italy, France, Belgium Flanders and Hungary.



Preparing for the EFIL 2011 General Assembly in Vienna

VIENNA - AUSTRIA



In the first week of June, EFIL member organisations will get together in Vienna for the Federation's biennial General Assembly, hosted by AFS Austria. Venue will be the Europahaus Convention Center, where we will have exclusive use of the magnificent Miller-Aichholz Palace, which offers a unique historical ambience and is perfectly suitable for the plenaries and workshops of the General Assembly.

Registration forms have been sent out, and a turn-out of about 70 people of the AFS leadership in Europe and beyond is expected. The General Assembly will open with a welcome dinner on Thursday 2 June, in the lovingly renovated restaurant of the historic Orangerie, overlooking the park, and ends on Sunday night with a gala dinner, celebrating EFIL's 40th anniversary. We're happy to announce that in Vienna six Partner Organisations are applying for EFIL membership, expanding our European Federation to 27 Member Organisations.



Meanwhile, good progress has been made with the preparations of the sessions and workshops. At the General Assembly participants will be invited to take a look at EFIL's past, present and future, in sessions focussing on 40 years of intercultural learning; the achievements of the past 2 years (Biennial Report 2009-2010); and EFIL's way forward (Business Plan 2011-2012).



For Friday evening, AFS Austria has kindly proposed several options as leisure activities, including guided walking tours "Vienna for Newcomers" and "Hot Spots of Classical Music in Vienna", or an evening at a Heuriger. Information on these activities has been included on the registration forms for delegates to make a choice.

EFIL and AFS Austria are looking forward to welcome the network partners at the General Assembly in Vienna, 2-5 June 2011.

EFIL Board elections coming up

VIENNA - AUSTRIA



At EFIL's General Assembly in Vienna, 2-5 June, elections will be held for the Federations's Board of Directors. Per the decision of the latest General Assembly, in Vienna three Members will be elected to the Board. The following Board members are serving until 2012: Roberto Ruffino (Italy), Christine Leimgruber (Switzerland), Michael Rosak (Czech Republik), Jörn Lehmann (Germany).

A call for nominations has been sent out. Candidacies have to be sent to EFIL addressed to the President of the Election Committee. The deadline for submission of candidacies to EFIL is 4 April 2011. Later that month, EFIL (on behalf of the Election Committee) will inform the Members of all candidacies and send all documentation by e-mail, including the ballot form.

AFS EuroNet expanding!

BRUSSELS - BELGIUM

Late 2010, EFIL sent out a call to reach AFS Alumni based in Brussels, in the European institutions and other organisations, with the intention to create an "AFS EuroNet" network. The call was distributed in various ways, including an article in the European Commission's newsletter "Commission en Direct", while contacts at the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Europe enthusiastically helped spreading the word.

The search for AFS alumni in Brussels has been very successful so far and the list is closing in on 100 names, including returnees from AFS exchanges going back as far as the 1960s. Along the way, even former EFIL Board members have turned up. Thank you to all the people who have helped putting us in contact with returnees and who have forwarded the call to others or distributed it within



their networks. As the search continues, we urge everyone to keep spreading the word - contact charlotte.klinting@afs.org at the EFIL secretariat if you are a former AFS'er in Brussels or if you know of more AFS'ers in or around the EU institutions.

Meanwhile, in the beginning of March the steering group has met for a second time to further discuss this 'project' of bringing AFS Alumni together to promote the AFS mission in Europe. To keep the momentum going, it was decided to start planning a first event as an opportunity for the people to meet in person. A dinner in Brussels will be arranged in the very near future, to allow people to link up and network with each other, and to update everyone on the growth and achievements of AFS and EFIL over the years. Details on venue and timing will be shared with all people on the list very soon!

Call for interest in supporting exchanges in Poland, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria

Development of AFS organisations in new European countries is one of the important working areas of EFIL. In the past few years these efforts resulted in setting up official AFS branches in four South-East European countries, with important help and involvement of established AFS organisations and AFS International.

The upcoming years are a chance to put a focus on further corners of Europe. An intern, who will concentrate primarily on these issues, will start working in the EFIL office in May. The development of AFS exchanges in Poland, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria will now feature strongly on the EFIL agenda and – once again – the support of existing AFS organisations will be indispensable. For the future partner organisations in these ‘new’ countries we will aim at identifying an established “mentor organisation”, similarly as for the South Eastern European countries.

At this point, however, EFIL is asking the whole network, to help us find all relevant contacts and people in Europe or even beyond, who could play a role in these development plans. Our intention is to form small e-mail working groups for each of the four countries, consisting of volunteers/staff interested in helping out. If possible, please spread in national AFS networks the information that EFIL is looking for:

- Contacts in these countries (AFS, business, family...) which could be useful in any way,
- Volunteers or staff having a connection with and/or interest in these countries, who could act as advisors or active members of supporting working groups.

Of course we are also open for any ideas and suggestions that come from the network. For all the above, please contact the EFIL Secretariat, ideally before the end of March 2011.

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.



From AFS in **Denmark** comes the news that after Louis Hansen (of the hosting team) left, tasks have been reshuffled a bit. Niels Martiny and Susanne Nadri work primarily with support. Niels' main area is still - but now not exclusively - support for the hosted students and host families; Susanne's is that of students abroad and their parents, also not exclusively. They do have overlapping cores and exploit the cross experiences from their respective angles, hence constituting the support team for the Year Programme. Admission/applications is handled by Tim Hubbard - sending side; and a new staff has joined the team: Katy Rützou-Hjelmkrone, in charge of the administrative tasks related to hosting as well as visa applications for students going abroad. Welcome Katy!



AFS **Belgium Flanders** announced the sad news that Annie Baetens has passed away. Annie occupied several positions, and was a solid rock and encyclopedia for the many colleagues she worked with. In 2007 she received an award from Tachi for her 30 years of service. Annie will be missed.





In **Hungary**, after a sabbatical leave Anett Deaver-Miklos is back at the AFS office in Budapest in her capacity as National Director. Diana Deszti-Rosta, who did a great job running the office during Anett's absence, has taken up her position as Programme Director again.



AFS **Egypt** has a new member on the team: Ronny Hanna is the new Sending Coordinator. Welcome Ronny!



In February, the AFS **Finland** office has moved to a new location.

New visiting address: Yrjönkatu 1 C, 00120 Helsinki. New postal address: PL 231, FI-00121 Helsinki



A three-day seminar called "Intercultural learning in Russia and abroad" took place in one of the key chapters of AFS in **Russia** -

Nizhny Novgorod, from 25-27 February. The seminar attracted 74 participants (experienced volunteers and new interested people) from 30 cities of Russia, from Moscow to Vladivos-



tok, from Pskov to Krasnodar. Guest trainers were Roberto Ruffino (AFS Italy and Chair of EFIL) and Bert Vercamer (AFS International).



AFS **Germany** has informed the AFS network that their cooperation with the Karlsruhochschule International University (KIU) in Karlsruhe, Germany, has entered its 3rd year. KIU offers a special scholarship for tuition in a 3 year-bachelor degree programme on "Intercultural Management and Communication" to AFS returnees. Note that the first semesters will be taught in German, the programme then switches to English. Further information on the programme can be found at the KIU website <http://karlsruhochschule.de/en/my-studies/intercultural-management-and-communication/> If you have any questions regarding the scholarship or the programme, please feel free to contact Romy Modlich from the KIU (mailto:rmodlich@karlsruhochschule.de or +49 721 1303 522).



In **Italy**, the Intercultura Foundation, in partnership with the four Universities of Milan and EXPO 2015, under the High Patronage of the President of the Italian Republic, organizes an international conference on "Reconciling Babel – Education for Cosmopolitanism", 7-9 April. The purpose of this conference is to favour a reflection on what it means today "global citizenship" and on how young people may be educated for this citizenship. More information can be found on the web site "www.reconcilingbabel.org", where you may also find the full program, a presentation of the 28 workshops and short biographies of the 34 well known speakers who have confirmed their attendance.



AFS **Turkey** has announced the launching of a new Very Short Program they will be running this summer along with one of the best high schools in Turkey, FMV Isik Okullari - Ayazaga Kampusu. They are inviting participants to spend 4-5 days together with their

peers at the campus of Isik University in Sile, Istanbul. The camp will take place 13-16 June. Participants attend academic, social and sports activities during the camp.



Focus on Interkultura Serbia

By Ivana Gazikalovic-Pavlovic, President of Interkultura Serbia and Representative of the AFS Branch Office in Serbia

BELGRADE - SERBIA



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

Numbers have been increasing ever since: four Serbian students participated in the year programme in 2008, seven in 2009 and ten in 2010. In 2010-11 we are hosting our first seven students from New Zealand, Turkey, Russia, Chile and Mexico. Our prospects for 2011-12 are to send 10-12 students, to host 10 on the year programme and 3 on ECTP and to increase the number of partners with whom we are doing exchanges. Scholarships have played a very important role in this initial stage of Interkultura. We are grateful to the partners who were able to offer scholarships or waive their hosting costs for Serbian students: Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Paraguay and Thailand. We are proud to say that Interkultura's project for AFS International Diversity Scholarship 2011 was approved, thus enabling us to send a student to Mexico on a full scholarship.

Although Interkultura has striven to develop the year programme as the core programme of AFS, we believe it is very important to develop also the short term programmes which help us reach out to larger numbers of students. Interkultura has had two successful class exchanges – Italy in 2009 and Turkey in 2010 – and a third one with Russia is on its way for 2011, as well as an EVA programme with Belgium.



Mid-stay orientation

Since the very beginning, our priority has been to set up, develop and strengthen the volunteer network. Interkultura volunteers have attended trainings set up by AFS Hungary and AFS Austria/Styria, five different trainings/study sessions organized and/or supported by EFIL, EFIL Programme Directors meetings in Belgrade and Sarajevo, the EFIL Summer Summits of 2009 and 2010 and a training on EVS by AFS Denmark. Apart from these formal trainings, one of Interkultura's volunteers gained invaluable experience as an intern at AFS Russia and AFS Latvia in the summer of 2010. Interkultura

volunteers have proved to be fast learners and hard workers. They have held numerous presentations at schools, organized activities to mark EFIL's European-wide Intercultural Dialogue Day in 2009 and 2010, organized selections and orientations and trainings for new volunteers. A teacher training seminar is scheduled for April 2011 aiming at developing good relations with schools. Needless to say, the volunteers have been priceless support for the hosted students and host families. At this point we are proud to have a core of six key volunteers who practically do the work of a national AFS office and another 15 active volunteers throughout the country who organize the usual volunteer activities.

When we look at the figures, our growth in numbers has been about 100% each year. However, we feel that in terms of quality we are growing more than 100% a year and have every reason to be satisfied. A big thank you to EFIL, AFS International and all the partners who have worked with us so far and a very special thank you to all the Serbian volunteers!



Key volunteers



Selections 2011

AFS back on track in Slovakia

By Eva Vitkova, Vice-Chair of the Board of AFS Czech Republic

A national meeting of volunteers of Intercultura Slovakia (IC SVK) took place in the weekend of 11-13 February 2011. Sixteen volunteers (former students, teachers and former host families), accompanied by Natalia Cukova (staff member of IC SVK), Karolina Puttova (National Director of neighbour AFS Czech Republic) and Eva Vitkova (Board Vice-Chair of AFS Czech Republic) met in the beautiful town of Banska Stiavnica in Central Slovakia.



The meeting agenda included topics such as the current status and development of IC SVK, the evaluation and planning of public relation activities, past and future trainings of volunteers, and much more. On Saturday afternoon, all volunteers participated in a workshop about interviews and the participant selection process. In the evenings there was time for team-building and sharing experiences. A strong spirit of commitment and engage-

ment was felt throughout the whole weekend. The Slovakian volunteers and host families are ready to welcome AFS students again.

The IDF grant of AFS International and the much appreciated efforts by the Czech AFS office, have given the volunteers in Slovakia the much needed boost to re-launch AFS activities in their country. Intercultura Slovakia is lucky to have such a motivated, experienced and enthusiastic volunteer base, which provides a strong ground for further growth.

ment was felt throughout the whole weekend. The Slovakian volunteers and host families are ready to welcome AFS students again.

Meanwhile, Intercultura Slovakia has officially applied to become Affiliate Member of the European Federation of Intercultural Learning. At EFIL's upcoming General Assembly in Vienna (2-5 June), the GA will vote on the admittance of six new Member Organisations, among them Intercultura Slovakia.

AFS Volunteers in Egypt - A mission, even in revolution

AFS Egypt has shared with us some images of AFS volunteers who are helping to rebuild Egypt after the revolution. Despite the existing uncertainty of what is coming next, everyone is quite excited and optimistic that the next phase in the history of Egypt will be a better one. The peaceful revolution has encouraged everyone in Egypt, including AFS volunteers, to go out and do what they can to get the country back on track economically, politically and socially in this transition period. The spirit is high, AFS Egypt and the Egyptian people want to move on and start building their new future. Let the pictures speak for themselves.



Blood donations in response to a call by the Egyptian Blood Bank



Cleaning up the trash piled up in the streets.



Volunteering at the Egyptian Food Bank

Group working on raising awareness of basic democracy and political participation



European Conference on Learning Mobility in Budapest

BUDAPEST - HUNGARY

A European Conference “Framework, Quality, and Impact of Young Europeans’ Learning Mobility” will take place on 11-13 May 2011 at the European Youth Center in Budapest, Hungary. This European conference of researchers, practitioners, and involved institutions and organisations, wants to take stock of current issues and research findings on educational youth mobility. This overview will serve to identify common interests, resources, and interfaces as a basis for collaboration projects, studies, and further exchanges within a European network of experts, who are interested in long-term cooperation.

The conference was designed by an international preparatory group and is organised by a consortium of European and national partner institutions. More information can be found at <http://www.forscher-praktiker-dialog.de/index/learningmobility2011/index.html>

You can participate in the conference by submitting your application until 27 March 2011 via the following link: <http://www.salto-youth.net/find-a-training/1999.html>

Conference fee is € 100,- including conference folder, accommodation and all meals. Travel costs can be reimbursed under certain conditions.

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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 directly from the Youth Forum website: <http://www.youthforum.org> and press@youthforum.org

EU Enlargement

The **Cyprus-Turkey** deadlock, lack of dialogue among Turkish political parties and the undermining of press freedom and other basic rights in Turkey are the main factors slowing down the country’s EU accession talks, said Ria Oomen-Ruijten (EPP, Netherlands), the rapporteur for a report and resolution adopted by the European Parliament, on 9 March, on the progress made by Turkey. MEPs from all the political groups were very critical about the slowness of Turkey’s progress but were divided about the opportunity of supporting or not supporting Turkey’s membership aspirations. Most of the political groups welcomed the idea of launching a dialogue with Turkey on visas in order to promote the mobility of students and businessmen, but when it came to assessing the country’s preparations towards

joining the EU, the EPP, GUE and EFD groups were mostly critical with regard to membership.

Youth



Around 160 young people from China and Europe attended the second flagship event of the **China-EU Year of Youth** which took place in Beijing on 23rd February. The event follows on from the first opening event held in January in Brussels, where more than 200 participants took part in workshops and debates. With a video message, José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, underlined the key role of Chinese and European youth in building bridges

of mutual understanding and friendship. He also stressed the year is an opportunity to reinforce and reinvigorate peaceful relations between the EU and China. 2011 was designated as the EU-China Year of Youth after 35 years of diplomatic relations between the EU and China, and is aimed at promoting intercultural dialogue and exchanges between European and Chinese young people. Future events include activities in the European Youth Week across Europe, a Youth Festival in Shenzhen and an EU-China Green week.

In pursuit of more and better evidence-based youth policy as well as closer links between policy and youth research across Europe, the European Commission and the Council of Europe jointly established the **Pool of European Youth Researchers** on 7-8th February. The group is formed by 25 members, all coming from different countries as well as different areas of research in the field of youth. The newly created pool will provide a plat-

form for consultation and exchange on new developments in the field of youth research, and offer a critical and forward looking perspective on youth policy strategies and approaches when requested by the partner institutions.

Education

At the last Education Council meeting on 14th February, Commissioner Vasiliou said that that the first drafts of national reform programmes were insufficient to attain the objectives set out by the European Commission in the Europe 2020 strategy. With austerity measures and budgets cuts for Education ministries sweeping Europe, Vasiliou regretted that member states were failing to acknowledge the importance of education for future growth. "We call on member states to stick the objectives in their national reform programmes, but in many cases, these programmes do not show enough ambition" she said.

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