



Sustaining our Future



KNOWLEDGE CAFÉ Minutes

Sustaining Our Future: Shaping the Role of Youth in Europe

Held by AEGEE – European Students Forum

We started our knowledge café with a round of presentations: we presented ourselves and the reasons that had brought us to that session. There were people from inside and outside Europe; lots of young people, but also representatives of institutions working with youth on willing to involve young people in their work.

Then we started a short description of what AEGEE is, and introduced why we were there at the IUCN World Conservation Forum. We explained how we are working to improve the knowledge on sustainability of European Youth through our Flagship Project for 2008-2009, called Sustaining Our Future (more information at: <http://www.aegee.org>, <http://www.aegee.org/sustaining>, <http://sufunews.blogspot.com>). We are working through local actions that have as an objective the members of our network but also the students of their universities. We propose a series of local actions throughout Europe arranged in several topics or subprojects:

- **European Day of Environment:** involving the whole network through small- to medium-sized activities, organized in their communities.
- **Youth Solar Days:** learning about solar energy in Europe.
- **Think Tank:** Creating a platform for companies and young people to meet, and find creative solutions to help the companies improve their sustainability.
- **Scandinavia Case Study:** visiting some of the most sustainable nations in Europe to observe, interact and learn from NGO's and active sectors of their societies.
- **Danube Project:** Raise awareness on the importance of Danube for Central Europe in the past, present and future.
- **Sustainability Trainings:** create a network of young people who can multiply the message of sustainable development.
- **Habitable Cities:** conference about challenges of an urban environment and the possible solutions.
- **Follow Up:** results presentation and lobbying in 2010

Then we started a round of questions, where we were asked on several questions related to AEGEE working system (“How do we recruit our members?”, “Do we have an age limit?”), and also if we are linked with other initiatives as Eurotope.

We were invited by Pavlos Georgiadis to collaborate with FRESH (Food Revitalisation and Eco-gastronomic Society of Hohenheim) by one of its members present at the KC. They invited us to a conference in November 28th on Agriculture and SD. They organize also FR events, conferences and even fairs of farmers and local products at universities. They offered to be advisors of AEGEE for topics related with agriculture.

Patrick Pierer, from Syngenta (world-leading agri-business committed to sustainable agriculture through innovative research & technology) also offered to build synergies between his company and FRESH.

Then the hot topic of limited resources + growing population came out. We as AEGEE work on an area where the main problem is not increasing population but the huge amount of resources that we consume per person. That is where we have focused our project.

We had later a small discussion on how can the results of the project be best used and distributed to other youth NGO's. We will need to involve as many local organizations as possible. Inside AEGEE it is quite easy (compared with working with externals) due to our network structure and a shared European spirit. As Pavlos from FRESH said, the way to achieve change is through individuals to family and friends to societies. This is for him the best way to achieve improvements in lifestyles.

Patrick Pierer pointed out how differences on societies can interfere with the outcomes of a project like ours. Where a true govern exists and media are structured, the global message can arrive easily; but in some other regions, Eastern Europe for instance (he lived in Ukraine and used it as an example) there is a lack of identification with global issues. For that reason, in his opinion, when working inside those societies it is important to focus on local problems. The situation in Russia was also included on this point by Anna from Moscow State University.

Participants from outside Europe were following attentively the discussions and they encouraged AEGEE to open to other realities (e.g. Africa). The importance of local approach to get the individuals into action and connect them with the global problems was commented by Reiko Ishiguro, from Japan Youth Ecology League and Japan Biodiversity Network.

We had a short wrap up because we had consumed all our time on discussions. Future collaborations may arise as a result of this Knowledge café who was a good opportunity to network, learn from other experiences and get new ideas.

Further contact:

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