



## **“THE BRIDGE – Connecting Mobility & Disability”**

### **Project Description**

#### GENERAL OVERVIEW:

“THE BRIDGE” is a pilot project born within the youth association AEGEE - European Students’ Forum. The project was promoted by the Human Rights Working Group (AEGEE-HRWG), who was the responsible of initially forming the Project and the Project Team. When the team was then set up, the HRWG remained present in the Project by its Projects Responsible with the task of Observer within the Project Team.

The Team consists of various persons from different AEGEE locals, holding different roles, which include:

- Project Manager
- Events Responsible
- Public Relations Responsible
- External Relations Responsible
- Thematic Responsibles
- Information & Technology Responsible
- Publications Responsible
- Fund Raising Responsible

The theme of “THE BRIDGE” is the difficult condition of the youth with a disability in Europe, especially for what concerns their relationship with the youth associations and in general with mobility.

The objectives are the increase of awareness of the disabled reality within the non-disabled people, the increase of the knowledge about the disabilities and the discovery of the tools for promoting the integration of the young people with a disability and in the end the increase of this integration at least within the youth organizations.

The major beneficiaries will be the youth with a disability, to whom we hope to open the doors of the student organisations that every year guarantee infinite opportunities for civil and cultural growth and the integration with different realities. And also the student organisations will benefit from the presence of members with a disability in their members list to further the opportunity for growth and the real possibility of confrontation

with problematic conditions strictly related to the defence and promotion of human rights. The surpassing of habitual cultural stereotypes, that prevent a proper interaction between the two worlds, will represent a considerable result packed with general benefits for the disabled and non disabled.

The activities planned for achieving the objectives are:

1) N.5 European conferences about the theme of the disability connected with the mobility in five different Countries of Europe.

2) A group of local activities consisting in seminars, debates, researches about the theme of the disabilities all over Europe.

3) A survey sent to all the locals of AEGEE and directed to get an overview of the integration of the disabled people in all of the university cities of Europe.

4) An internal action within AEGEE directed to increase knowledge and awareness of the disabilities and to promote the involvement of the disabled people in the events of the organization.

5) A publication summarizing all the results of the previous activities to be spread all around Europe and to be sent to the European Commission and to the Council of Europe.

The project will explore concrete and pressing issues related to the Disability-Mobility debate. The aim is to look deeper into the subject, and raise the necessary awareness and debate, in order to be able to conceive concrete actions that can be followed up, with the desired multiplier effect, as a step towards further work.

#### PROJECT'S RELAVANCE TO AEGEE`S MAIN FIELDS OF ACTION:

AEGEE's goals always keep in mind its 4 main fields of action, namely Peace and Stability, Higher Education, Cultural Exchange, Active Citizenship, all this within a context of European Integration. This project serves both the purpose of intensifying focus in these categories, as well as focusing further on the aspect of Social Inclusion, or more specifically Disability itself, which has become a salient issue in European society, not least within the youth scene, and where we would like to both set an example and a precedent that can be followed, through our venture into this field.

#### Cultural Exchange

The aspect of Cultural Exchange will be fulfilled through the bringing together of youth from different countries and cultures, together for a few days during the conferences and the local activities, where not only they will have to discuss and compromise on different points of views and opinions, reflected not least by their backgrounds, but where they will have to live and share time and resources together, both during the actual work the activity involves, as well as during free time, such as during the social programme.

This concept applies equally to disabled and non-disabled youth, as will be seen further on – the important aspect is to have a fair cross-section of youths, from as many

different Council of Europe countries as possible, as can be seen from this application, all with different backgrounds, histories and experiences, but being able to share better in this experience through the fostering of cultural understanding.

### Active Citizenship

As regards Active Citizenship, AEGEE has always believed that going to the grassroots is one of the best ways to 'get things done'. The AEGEE members of today are the European citizens and leaders of tomorrow, and their involvement in such topics today will prepare them with both the awareness and determination necessary to tackle things more decisively in a few years' time, be it simply through their vote, or else through local committees, specific-interest lobby groups, or from further up in the echelons of power.

### European Integration

As regards the issue of European Integration, AEGEE firmly believes in the concept of a united Europe, as also envisioned by the founding fathers of the Council of Europe and the European Union. Much as these structures nowadays brings Europeans closer on a number of main areas, such as the need for continuing education, and the fight against drugs, so does AEGEE believe that certain topics in particular, in this case the topic of Disability, should also be on the 'menu' of what we aspire to bring Europeans closer on – awareness among all sections of the community, in our case especially the youth sector, of the current situation, and appropriate action towards making a change, together.

### Social Inclusion and Disability

Finally, one has to tackle the aspect of Social Inclusion, and more specifically the issue of Disability. The AEGEE stands for 'European Students' Forum', the umbrella group for students of every kind of studying around Europe. With 15,000 members around the continent, the largest organisation of its kind, it is only sensible that AEGEE should represent the widest cross-section of students around Europe. This includes being representative of creed, colour, gender, and political opinion, among other things – such opinions are also expressed openly in AEGEE through various Working Groups, discussing issues such as International Politics, Human Rights and Culture – however, the disabled section of youth has its place as equally as all other sectional groups that can be identified should have.

Enjoying consultative status with a number of European bodies, including the Council of Europe itself, it is both in the interest of, as well as the responsibility of AEGEE, to be both inclusive in its composition, as well as equally representative in the way it projects both its image and its views externally.

It is for these reasons that a project on Disability, or rather on exploring methods of building this 'Bridge' from Disability to Mobility, one of the stated aims of AEGEE, is essential in both the short and long-term goals of our association.

## THE ACTIVITIES IN DETAIL:

1) N.5 European conferences about the theme of the disability connected with the mobility in five different Countries of Europe.

The European conferences will be set up in 5 different Countries. Four of them will be devoted to treat a specific theme; meanwhile the last one will be the closure conference and will summarize the work and the results of the others.

The conferences will be:

- a) "The disabled & the facilitator: a complex relation", April 2005 Wroclaw (Poland).
- b) "Design and Disability", May 2005 Delft (The Netherlands).
- c) "The disabled and the European programs of student mobility", TBA
- d) "The European legislation about the disabilities", TBA
- e) "The Closing Conference", TBA

2) A group of local activities consisting in seminars, debates, researches about the theme of the disabilities all over Europe.

The local activities planned within the project are a general category including all those activities directed to a local target and focused on the theme of the disabilities. They mostly consist in local seminars, debates, spreading of information.

3) A survey sent to all the locals of AEGEE and directed to get an overview of the integration of the disabled people in all of the university cities of Europe.

A survey will be sent to all the locals of AEGEE. It will monitor the integration of the disabled people in the cities of Europe: it will ask about public transports, public services, the access to the Institutions and to the public libraries, and all those kind of subjects. A member of the Team who is disabled is taking care of preparing this survey, and in the end all the information collected will be summarized on the final publication.

4) An internal action within AEGEE directed to increase knowledge and awareness of the disabilities and to promote the involvement of young people with a disability in the events of the organization.

Knowledge and the awareness of the dimension of the young people with a disability will be increased through a group of individuals devoted to discuss the theme, and for what concerns the involvement of the disabled people in the AEGEE events, it will be promoted first of all within the project "Summer University", that's the biggest and the most populated project of AEGEE, and that's already in close contact with the Team and it is creating a category of events that are accessible by the disabled people.

5) A publication summarizing all the results of the previous activities to be spread all around Europe and to be sent to the European Commission and to the Council of Europe.

A publication will be realised at the end of the project. It will be a summary of all of the results of each activity. It will be a report with some statistics, but even a sort of operator manual for the organizers of an event involving even disabled people. It will be delivered within AEGEE through the general mailing and a desk at the Statutory Meetings of the association, but it will be sent even to the other organizations focused on the theme of the disabilities, to the administrative offices devoted to the thematic and to the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

#### THE PARTNERS:

“THE BRIDGE” is a project promoted by many partners. Some of them are groups, some others are organizations, and some of them are within AEGEE, some others are external.

Within AEGEE the project is promoted by two groups - the “THE BRIDGE” Coordination Team and the Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) of AEGEE and many AEGEE locals.

As external partners the project is promoted by the “European Movement Malta” (EMI) and by the “Malta Federation of Organisations Persons with Disability” (FMOPD).