



# Socrates Action Day 1998 Results

*“The European students education is  
the key for a United Europe”*

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Violeta Bajenaru

## A Youth Network for a United Europe?

*"In our reality there are so many things waiting to be solved in daily life that European students' associations could easily pass through unnoticed".* What a classical aggressive marketing strategy, you can say, and you may be right. But maybe it won't be a lost of time reading a few lines about our activity and us.

There are moments in youth's live where they have to take their own decisions, to involve themselves. Maybe the European Union projects concerning the European mobility are less important than the ones for agriculture, communication and defense. There are budgets of milliards of ECU's, all for a United Europe. And the question is who are all these addressed to? It's simple, for those who now are 20-30 years old and the future generations. And isn't it normal to take care of them, so they have the chance to taste the desired European success?

But let's not get boring. What has to be put forward is that the people involved in the European Students' Association (AEGEE), already understood what is the only way to go for Europe: TOGETHER! This is the belief of all 278-university cities from the 43 European countries, which is our European Network. And this is the voice of the students not only from the European Studies faculties or political sciences but also from business, medicine, economy, arts or maths. Europe is for all of us and what we need to know exactly is the role we have on this European society.

Even without a national level of co-ordination it is possible to act, especially nowadays in the Europe of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where we usually have to face the following question: "What's our nationality?" It is possible, but not without effort. Maybe the ones who have some knowledge about AEGEE, should wonder: how is it possible to organize more than 100 European conferences and more than 80 Summer Universities a year? How can we have two

General Assemblies, with 800 participants and also two AEGEE Presidents' Meetings, all the time in different places? This is only the example of the last two years: Amsterdam, Budapest, Valladolid, Athena, Ankara, Maastricht, Hamburg, Enschede, Timisoara, Warsaw, Veszprém, Aix-en-Provence and Cagliari!

Now, a question arises "Where is the money gathered, who finances all of this?" The answer is simple: VOLUNTEERS! And what shrilled is added: EUROPEAN VOLUNTEERS. They are young people interested to work on European projects, young people for whom the linguistic barriers have been forgotten a long time ago, people who in the same day after sleeping in a gym and eating a sandwich are taking part in receptions, meeting the president of the European Commission or European Parliament. And they are remarked and appreciated.

To conclude, AEGEE believes that the ones who are writing the European history, especially on youth matters should have tried the AEGEE phenomenon. And it might not be a surprise if the encyclopedias of the generation 2050 would write fragments such as: "1985 - was founded in Paris the European students movement AEGEE. Through the ideals it promoted and its actions, all related to the European realities of that age, AEGEE helped the youth people to believe in the United Europe."

Dan LUCA  
AEGEE-Europe



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL XXII  
EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH

The Director-General

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### **Note to the Directors of the SOCRATES National Agencies**

#### **Subject : SOCRATES Action Day, 12 November 1998**

AEGEE is a big interdisciplinary European student association, it is non-political, non-profit making and non-religious. AEGEE is represented in 278 university centers in over 43 countries and promotes European integration through the organization of conferences, seminars and other activities.

AEGEE Europe has been involved since its creation in the conception and assessment of the ERASMUS/SOCRATES programme. In 1997, they successfully organized the first SOCRATES Action Day, which gathered 5 500 persons all over Europe in order to evaluate the implementation of the SOCRATES programme by the local actors, students, teachers, administrative staff, rectors.

Their initiative received the support of the CRE and the results were published in a brochure which was translated and distributed both in English and French. The result of their work was also disseminated by the media.

On 12 November 1998, AEGEE will organize a second **SOCRATES Action Day** in 100 antennae all over Europe.

We would like to ask you to offer them any kind of support you deem appropriate in relation to their activity of promotion of the SOCRATES programme.

D.Lenarduzzi  
Acting Director-General

## **The duty of AEGEE-EUROPE:**

### **Being at the core of every debate concerning European Higher Education**

The strong links between European higher education and AEGEE-EUROPE are of course coming first of all from the very nature of AEGEE as a European student movement. As such AEGEE will keep a lasting credibility with the rest of society if it is of the major voice expressing truly European opinions on issues related with European higher education policies or programmes. European students have to advocate positions on existing policies or asking for new policies in the field of higher education as it is a role that nobody else can play.

But beyond its very nature, this link is deeply rooted in both the history of AEGEE-EUROPE and the history of the European higher education programmes. In a much stronger sense than for any other European student organization.

AEGEE-EUROPE played a big role in promoting the ERASMUS programmes all through European universities at a time when mostly skepticism was reigning in rector and professor's offices and played a decisive role in getting it adopted. Thanks to an intense and very successful lobbying operation in 1986/87 towards big newspapers in most EC countries (promoting ERASMUS as the programme expected by the European students) and series of meetings with heads of states or government (W.MARTENS in Belgium, R. LUBBERS in The Netherlands and finally F. MITTERRAND in France), AEGEE-EUROPE helped keeping ERASMUS on the agenda of the Council of Ministers despite two refusals coming from France, Germany and UK. And finally, after this crucial lunch to which President MITTERRAND invited the 20 Board members of AEGEE-EUROPE and where he got convinced that a top-level intervention was required to move ERASMUS out of a bleak prospect, ERASMUS was adopted three weeks later.

Immediately after, when AEGEE tried to change the way students were treated in ERASMUS (like products and not like partners), AEGEE then did learn how to use critics and the possibility to make them public has a powerful force to, at least, be able to keep an independent voice.

To summarize, these links of AEGEE-EUROPE and European higher education policies were the strongest when AEGEE was developing its more critical positions. Supporting the objectives but questioning the methods. As a student, grass-root organization, it would indeed be quite a surprise that on the implementation aspects AEGEE will have the same opinion as a huge administration!

This series of 100 Socrates conferences show at least clearly that AEGEE, as it has always done, will support first open, transparent and public debates of those policies!

Franck BIANCHERI  
Founder - President of AEGEE-Europe

## **Permanent patronage for AEGEE-Europe**

Jacques Santer - Président de la Commission Européenne  
Daniel Tarschys -Secrétaire Général du Conseil de l'Europe  
Hans van den Broek – Membre de la Commission Européenne  
Catherine Lalumière – Membre du Parlement Européen  
Mikhail Gorbatchev  
Václav Havel - Président de la République Tchèque  
Arpád Göncz - Président de Hongrie

## **AEGEE-Europe thanks for their support**

European Commission  
Council of Europe  
European Parliament  
European Conference of Rectors

Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Forschung und Technologie – Germany  
Department for Education and Employment – England  
Ministerie van Vlaamse Gemeenschap, Departement Onderwijs – Belgium  
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science – The Netherlands  
Bundesministerin für Unterricht und Kulturelle Angelegenheiten – Austria  
Ministry of Education and Science – Swedish  
Minister of Education – Denmark  
Minister for Education and Science – Ireland  
Office fédéral de l'éducation et de la science – Switzerland  
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science – Iceland  
Ministerul Integrarii Europene - Romania  
Ministry of Education and Sport – Republic of Slovenia  
Ministry of Education and Science – Republic of Latvia

## **2000/2006: A New Generation of Programs**

At the dawning of the “knowledge age” we are moving into a new phase of European development. The “AGENDA 2000” proposals see the Union rising to the challenge: innovation, research, education and training are to become core axes of internal policy. It is really important to underline that the primary aim of education is the development of human potential, of the whole person, enabling all citizens, especially young people, to participate as fully as possible in cultural, economic, political and social life.

On 27 May 1998, the Commission adopted proposals for renewing the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programs and for a new program “Youth”, which brings together the European Voluntary Service and Youth for Europe. Last December '98 the Education Council of the EU reached an agreement on Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci for the period 2000-2006. The budget foresees 1.550 millions of Euro to be used during seven years for Socrates and 1.150 Euro for Leonardo.

### **SOCRATES**

The three years following the adoption of Socrates in 1995 have seen exceptional progress, and the aim now is to maintain the rate of progress in achieving the program's objectives. Socrates covers the entire field of education. It has boosted European co-operation in terms of volume and quality in various fields including schools, adult education and open and distance learning. The “ERASMUS” part of this program has become a fixture the length and breadth of Europe. However, there are clearly obstacles to the realization of their full potential. For that reason the new Socrates program will be based on flexibility and innovation, easier access and easier procedures for submitting and selecting applications.

In order to fulfill these aims the new Socrates program will be focusing on:

#### 4 objectives:

- To strengthen the European dimension of education at all levels
- To promote European co-operation in all sectors
- To develop exchanges of information and experience
- To encourage innovation

#### and 8 actions:

- |                                     |           |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| • School education                  | COMENIUS  |
| • Higher education                  | ERASMUS   |
| • Other educational pathways        | GRUNDTVIG |
| • Language teaching and learning    | LINGUA    |
| • Education and multimedia          | ATLAS     |
| • Observation and innovation        |           |
| • Joint actions with other programs |           |
| • Accompanying measures             |           |

# **AEGEE's viewpoint on the European Commission's Proposal in the field of education “SOCRATES”**

We AEGEE with the emphasis put by the Commission on Life Long Learning (LLL) and Training.

In fact, we consider LLL as the key for education matters in the future. With an ever changing work environment, it will in fact be necessary for everyone to rehearse and renew its skills and knowledge in order to be permanently adapted to the requirements of the job market.

Therefore, the education system has to be adapted so that anyone, at any education level and at any age, can get access and gain new knowledge.

The formal education system will have to be reformed but we consider it the main responsibility of each Member States, in co-ordination with the formal education actors and companies, to work on the content. The European Commission main responsibility being to create an efficient and coherent structure framing these new relations between formal education systems, companies and itself in order to achieve its 3 development aims:

1. Knowledge
2. Citizenship
3. Employability

In the frame of these 3 directions, we would like to make some comments on the proposal presented by the Commission to the Parliament and Council.

- Emphasis should be put on the **promotion of language and cultural skills**. Indeed, by acquiring foreign languages, each person will have an easier access to all information displayed through various means (multimedia and Internet being the most appropriate ones). It is a crucial step in the direction of the building of a real European Dimension into the education process as it gives access to a much broader scale of direct information.
- A **clear and strong link between education systems and companies** must be organized. It is crucial that this link should be a priority in the Commission proposal. In today's context, it would be inappropriate to present a educational program where these relations are not strongly encouraged and organized. As one of the main aim of the SOCRATES program is to develop employability, this link is of crucial importance. As such, the creation of another information network (EKC) parallel to those already existing (EIC network) seems to be a mistake as it creates another barrier between students (or any other person interested in getting educated) and companies. Unless it clearly brings an absolute specificity, the EKC network should rather be inserted into the EIC one.

- **Student representatives must be involved in the decision and information process.** As being the most directly concerned by the quality and relevance of education, students should be consulted on a permanent basis.
- A **coherent administrative process** must be organized. We welcome the decentralization but we are concerned by its efficiency. We are concerned by the fact that till now, the National Structures (SOCRATES National Agencies for example) did not have enough resources to carry on an efficient work. We would like the Commission to ensure that the efficiency and quality of the administrative process will be reached through this decentralization. More detail about the concept of the “integrated Management Structure” are eagerly expected. We also wish that this greater decentralization will not limit the access to this program for European association.
- We appreciate the emphasis put by the Commission on the need for a better information about, and evaluation of, the SOCRATES program. Nevertheless, we hope that the creation of the Committee (composed of Member States representatives) will not harm the **independence of the Commission in its decision process**.
- In the frame of the Grundtvig Action, we regret that the target group is limited only to employees or persons having left the education system without a sufficient achievement. As a matter of fact, **LLL is aimed at ANY person willing to acquire new knowledge and shouldn't be reduced**. Furthermore, the program should insist on creating tools to recognize the acquisition of knowledge through experience in NGO management
- **Financial Impact.** The grant awarded per month to ERASMUS students is still far insufficient to prevent the creation of an elitist selection process. As well the general budget awarded to GRUNDTVIG is far too insufficient in relation with the target group which has to be reached.

## **From Socrates Action Day - November, 12th 1997 to Socrates Action Day - November, 12th 1998**

On November 12<sup>th</sup> 1997, in 54 locals of AEGEE, all over Europe, an evaluation of the Socrates program took place at the same time. All together, we were 6500 persons making our voice heard. For the first time, in 1997, we also considered the opinion of countries like Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovak Republic that were new partners at this program. AEGEE Europe is very concerned by the enlargement of the Socrates program, as a tool toward a greater democratic approach towards education and civil society in these later countries.

### **November, the 12th 1998**

Education is a key factor for the development of the individual, for integrating him in the active life. The new Treaty of Amsterdam is very clear about it: it gives to the European Union the responsibility of "promoting the development of a new higher conscience of the people, emphasizing their large access to education".

Having the experience of the previous year, in 1999 we carried on with the Socrates Action Day project. We want to reveal the weak parts of this program, from our point of view, in order to be solved. An evaluation program has taken place in 100 locals at the same time, and furthermore, personalities from all over Europe active in education field, listened to our voices, and together we tried to find a suitable solution.

Working together on a project that involved more than 10 000 people, AEGEE Europe, has proved again its power and determination to carry on with this project in 1999

### **SOCRATES ACTION DAY**

Studying abroad is a great experience; it teaches us the most valuable thing: tolerance, it gives us possibility of understanding other people values, without judging them. Studying in an international environment gives you opportunity not only to acquire professional knowledge, but also offers you a general overview about the real means of friendship, working in a different environment.

The Socrates program may be one of the most precious gift that the European Union gave us, so it is our duty to do the most of it, to improve it, to do the best to make it work properly, because we are the beneficiary of it.

It is our main responsibility to express our opinions about this program, about the difficulties we encountered, **ABOUT OUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE**

In 1997 new countries from Central and Eastern Europe joined the Socrates program, and the whole situation changed its perspective, new challenges showed up.

Our main responsibility is to state clearly what are the main difficulties from our point of view, as part of this program, and also to make sure the good functioning of this program, to be aware of our opinions.

The Socrates Action Day evaluation brochure presents a general overview on the local events organized simultaneously on the 12th November, in 100 locals all over Europe, and is trying to make everybody aware that things are still far from being well settled and there is a need of improvement.

Publishing our results, we want to prove that we are an active part of this program, and we are ready to do everything for its functioning in good conditions.

Violeta BAJENARU  
Socrates Action Day 1998 coordinator

# **Socrates Action Day - Final Results**

## **1. Financial overview**

- “ All participants taking part in Socrates Action Day all over Europe considered this to be the greatest problem of the Socrates program. Many of the students who want to study abroad have to save money for a long time in order to be able to realize their goals and be able to cover all living costs;
- “ The money for each participant is basically not enough for most European countries. Some Universities support the student going abroad additionally to the financial support of the EU, but this money only equalize additional expenses; they are not sufficient to pay the usual costs of living.
- “ Financial situation of exchange students are not the same since living costs very in different parts of Europe; for example the living costs in northern Europe are considerable higher than in southern Europe.
- “ Most of the students wishing to study abroad express their opinion that they won't go, unless a scholarship is provided.
- “ Due the insufficient amount of money, there is a certain elitism, as poorer students do not even ask, knowing in advance they won't be able to support the living costs.
- “ There is also an unfair way of distributing money. Usually students receive the same amount of money, not taking into consideration, that living expenses differ from country to country. It is well known that the cost for living is considerably higher in the countries in the Northern part of Europe then in the Southern part.

## **2. Lack of information**

- “ There is a great lack of information at the University level about other universities, about the courses and living conditions in other countries.
- “ Most of the information comes from friends, relatives, and very few from the specialized departments of Universities which main task is to ensure this kind of information, therefore information centers of universities are not very effective.
- “ Home universities did not always make clear as to what was expected from students.

- “ Due to the lack of information, a lot of students think there is a huge problem to find a place to live in a foreign country.
- “ Universities have also problems in communication with the DG XXII.
- “ Once arrived abroad, students have to face alone all the difficulties arising from different culture, different academic system, and social integration.

### **3. Lack of contact**

- “ All students, who took part to Socrates program, experienced a difficulty to get in contact with other "non-exchange-students". Most often they were considered to be a "special person" who stood a little bit aside; so they formed a group of exchange students outside "the regular" students. For example in Berlin, this problem is caused by the fact that the exchanged students are lodged separately, away from the city center and from areas where most students live.
- “ Agreements are established ad hoc between Universities, though these are not very solid. Very often students are told that the specialized departments of Universities took care of arranging their living conditions at the hosting country, but once arriving to the destination they have to arrange a lot themselves.
- “ There is a need for better organization between universities and better communication between staff in both countries, and students.

### **4. Selection criteria**

- “ In some cases, students are automatically accepted, as the demand is not so high (for example, few students apply for going to study in the Eastern and Central European countries); the selection criteria in some other cases is so selective, that students cannot go. The most desirable countries for studying abroad are England, France, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.
- “ Usually students have to present a report. Most often a successful application depends on academic achievement.
- “ In most cases, students have to prove a basic knowledge of foreign languages.
- “ Regarding to the transparency, some students stated that there had been enough transparency in the process of selection and there was a common acceptance of the selection criteria (AEGEE Berlin), but there is also an opinion among the students that still Erasmus scholarship are given to relatives or friends.

## **5. Contact with host universities**

- “ There are considerable differences between universities. Erasmus is based on the co-operation of institutes; therefore there is a big difference between students from different faculties.
- “ The success or non-success of studying abroad depends very much on the personal interest of the professors. The professors seem to be the most important to activate and help students during their stay abroad.
- “ There is not sufficient support from the University authorities and professors.

## **6. European Credit Transfer System**

- “ Due to this system, there is a general fear of delaying graduation.
- “ The credit system for foreign courses is not accepted by most of the professors, therefore the studies in foreign countries increase the necessary time for graduation.
- “ There are cases, when professors recognize the academic students' achievement only if they know personally the professor who granted them, or if they checked previously the program.
- “ There are specific fields, meeting certain difficulties in organizing exchanges.
- “ Sometimes, there is a delay in recognizing the academic achievements, caused by the slowness of the Host University in sending the results to the home university.

## **7. Language courses**

- “ The lack of knowledge of the language of the host country is a barrier to the integration of students, therefore the program should focus more on the language preparation.
- “ In the most cases English is the most frequently language. Most of the universities offer courses in English for the arriving students.
- “ Language courses are arranged in the most of the countries for the arriving students
- “ The courses themselves vary in usefulness, but they are a good forum for meeting with other Erasmus students.
- “ Language courses are underestimated. People do not think about it before going to a foreign country. In every city, and even in different faculties belonging to the same university, there are different conditions considering language courses.
- “ Most students expressed their regret that language courses are not available for each country.

Violeta BAJENARU  
Socrates Action Day 1998 coordinator

## **100 antennae working together on the future of SOCRATES**

Austria :	1.Innsbruck
	2.Vienna
Belgium :	3.Brussels
	4 Leuven
Bosnia :	5 Sarajevo
Bulgaria :	6 Blagoevgrad
Croatia :	7 Zagreb
Czech Republic :	8 Plzen, 9 Praha
Denmark :	10 Copenhagen
France :	11 Aix-en-Provence 12 Paris 13 Strasbourg
Germany :	14 Aachen 15 Augsburg 16 Berlin 17 Duisburg 18 Giessen 19 Hamburg 20 Heidelberg, 21 Karlsruhe 22 Kiel 23 Mainz 24 Passau 25 Trier
Greece :	26 Athens 27 Peiraias 28 Thessaloniki
Finland :	29 Helsinki 30 Tampere 31 Turku
Hungary :	32 Budapest 33 Debrecen 34 Szeged 35 Veszprem
Ireland :	36 Dublin
Italy :	37 Bergamo 38 Cagliari 39 Firenze 40 Genova 41 Milano 42 Napoli 43 Palermo 44 Perugia 45 Roma 46 Salerno 47 Torino 48 Treviso 49 Udine
Lithuania :	50 Kaunas

Malta :	51 Valetta
Macedonia, FRYO :	52 Skopje
Moldavia :	53 Chisinau
Netherlands :	54 Delft
	55 Enschede
	56 Groningen
	57 Maastricht
	58 Rotterdam
	59 Utrecht
Poland :	60 Gdansk
	61 Lublin
	62 Poznan
	63 Warsawa
Portugal :	64 Coimbra
Romania :	65 Alba-Iulia
	66 Bacau
	67 Baia Mare
	68 Brasov
	69 Bucuresti
	70 Cluj-Napoca
	71 Constanta,
	72 Craiova
	73 Iasi
	74 Oradea
	75 Sibiu
	76 Timisoara
	77 Targoviste
Russia :	78 Moscow
Slovakia :	79 Bratislava
Slovenia :	80 Ljubljana
	81 Maribor
Spain :	82 Barcelona
	83 Madrid
	84 Sevilla
	85 Valencia
	86 Zaragoza
Sweden :	87 Lund
	88 Stockholm
Turkey :	89 Adana
	90 Ankara
	91 Istanbul
	92 Izmir
United Kingdom :	93 Belfast
	94 Canterbury
	95 Keele
	96 London
Ukraine :	97 Kyiv
	98 L'viv
Yugoslavia :	99 Beograd
	100 Novi Sad

## **AEGEE CANTERBURY - ERASMUS PROGRAM "OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFE TIME"**

The experience of European students, who have been or currently are Erasmus students, was the context in which we looked at the European Socrates Day. The aim was to assess the opportunity to be an Erasmus student and what the main successes and failures of the program are.

The overall impression is one of the privileges felt by those who go abroad to be able to study in another country. "Opportunity of a life time" and chance to "build confidence" were a couple of comments. It became apparent that the students had used the opportunity to do a lot more than improve their language skills. They had embraced the culture, in which they were living and experienced frustrations of the bureaucracies.

They all agreed that the funding received from the European Union was as essential in their financial survival. Local Authority funding and parental contributions were also key.

The main complain seemed to be the lack of organization and communication. Once in the host country, there was no problem with the accommodation, but the main problem rested with the courses themselves. The home university did not always make it clear as to what was expected from the students in order to count towards their British degree program. The "receiving university" was not always helpful and British students found the lack of personal contact with tutors very frustrating. Language courses seemed to be put on in most countries for the arriving students.

In our point of view there is a need for better organization between universities and better communication between staff in both countries and students. The program should be widened and strengthened, as it was agreed that this is the most real way the European Union can touch students' lives.

## **AEGEE ROTTERDAM THE GREATEST PROBLEM - A KNOWLEDGEMENT OF THEIR STUDY ABROAD**

AEGEE-Rotterdam organized on the 12th November, a debate with the coordinator of all the faculties of the University. The discussion was lead by the head of the Information Center for International Relations, which supplies housing for the international students and helps them to find their way in Rotterdam.

The greatest problem for the students was the acknowledgment of the study results. Some students taking part in a Socrates program had to do their exams in their country again, because the home university didn't recognize their results. So, there is an opinion that the ECTS system doesn't work very well. The conversion of the result is still a difficult issue, because every country has its own system that in many cases is not easy to translate in the system of another country.

Speaking about lodging, there is a general opinion that it is arranged in good conditions. Some of the Erasmus students had some problems, but due to the fact that students themselves didn't inform about it. We think that students should be informed in order to take an active part in this respect. For example in Rotterdam, there is a surplus of exchange student that come to University in Rotterdam, so it is difficult to find housing but the Information Center for International Relations is working on that.

## **AEGEE CAGLIARI - BEING EUROPEAN INSIDE YOUR MIND**

On the 12th of November AEGEE Cagliari joined the Socrates Action Day project, in order to discuss about the problems concerning Socrates program.

Our main goal was to inform people about this program, to make the students aware about the opportunities of studying abroad. We invited to the discussion also, the boards of the main European associations which are activate in Cagliari: AIESEC, ELSA. JR. ENTREPRISE, ESN. The problems coming out from the debate were quite always the same: not much money, but the big problem seemed to be the lack of information.

Speaking about the students who took part at our event, a fact is relevant: among the departments, it seems that students at Political Science are the most interested in these topics (25%), followed by students at Law (19,8%), Engineering (19.2%), Languages (8%), Economy (9,6%), Biology (6,4%), History, Medicine, Philosophy.

As a coordinator of Socrates Action Day I have to say that students who believe in Europe still have to work hard to solve the two main problems: working and expressing our opinion, wherever we are. AEGEE Cagliari together with ESN, have decided to work closer together for the same purpose: to try to improve the financial support, to make possible the preparation for outgoing students, and to take care of the incoming students.

## **AEGEE LUND LUND - A STUDENT CITY**

AEGEE Lund organized on the 12th November 1998, Socrates Action Day, a debate on Socrates/Erasmus program.

Here are some points about the situation of Erasmus program in Lund: In general, the students coming to Lund are in the end of their studies and they are doing their final year or final thesis at Lund University. Courses offered to foreign students are always given in English, and not in the Swedish language. The social network for the foreign students is working very well through student unions, International Office at the University, ESN, IAESTE, and several other associations. Some foreign students are complaining about the higher living conditions in Sweden, and have experienced some problems in getting their scholarship money to cover their stay in Lund. Despite of this fact, quite a lot of students return to Lund after their Erasmus, to do their final thesis or even a PhD which indicates that they appreciate the University and enjoy the student life that is always present in the lively student town of Lund.

**AEGEE BUCURESTI**  
**DUE TO THE FINANCIAL CRISES, THE UNIVERSITY CANNOT**  
**SUPPORT THE ADDITIONAL EXPENSES**

Romania joined Socrates program in 1997, 1997-1998 being a transitory year, a year for preparation, for establishing new contacts, for promoting this program in the university environment, both students and professors. During this year AEGEE played an active role within the student environment, establishing an Erasmus Student Office with the assistance of Socrates National Agency.

The day of the 12th November was dedicated to promoting Socrates program, because we want that Socrates program not only to survive, but also to be implemented in a way, which ensures its survival. We presented the general situation about Erasmus program in Romania,

During the academic year 1998-1999:

- “ 1500 Romanian students are going to study abroad as Erasmus students.
- “ The average scholarship they are getting is 350 ECU per month, the maximum they can get is 490 ECU per month.
- “ Due to the financial crises, the universities cannot support the additional expenses, therefore the only financial source being the money they receive from the European Commission. There are only five students from Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, who were also sponsored by the “Soros” Foundation.

**AEGEE BACAU**  
**BACAU - A FAIRLY NEW UNIVERSITY**

Our conference in Bacau had a double purpose: promotion of the program among the students and the evaluation of the program already implemented in the University of Bacau, which was set up in 1997. From the very beginning it faced a lot of difficulties. The main problems that were encountered are the following:

- “ The department of Foreign Relations is missing. It is replaced by the voluntary work of few teachers.
- “ An inadequate system of communication (one fax machine for the whole university, few computers connected to Internet). Because of this situation a lot of partnership contracts with other universities did not reach us or could not be sent.
- “ The University did not receive in time the money to start the preparatory visits abroad, although it had contact with other 17 universities in Europe. Therefore, the 1998-1999 program is limited to only three students in Germany, Italy and France.
- “ Bacau is a fairly new university, which effectively started to develop after revolution, in 1989. There is still some work to consolidate different departments of study

## **AEGEE-CLUJ-NAPOCA**

### **STUDENTS ARE INTERESTED IN SOCRATES PROGRAM**

... fact confirmed by the 400 participants at "Socrates Action Day" organized by a strong organizing team of AEGEE-Cluj-Napoca. The main conclusions after the discussions include as follow:

- Socrates program was not promoted enough by universities.
- The students don't know how this program works - Socrates is a partnership program, not an assistantship program as Tempus was and this implies a financial effort from the part of the participant universities, as EC covers only 25% of the costs for Romania and 10% for the EU countries.
- Due to the modality used by universities of promoting the program, the students are confused and they don't know when to apply for the scholarships. They are dissatisfied by the fact that they didn't receive the necessary information in time from the International Relations Bureau and that they found out too late about Socrates scholarships or not at all.
- The students don't believe, yet, that the selection is based entirely on the academic merit.
- Not all of them know that 350-400 ECU is not enough to survive in an EU country.
- The students don't know the fact that the inside- procedures of the EC last very much and this is why the payments are delayed and the results of the Institutional Contract are made public only in late Spring (April, May). Thus, it results a series of problems as: preparing the selection exam, completing of the students' files, finding alternative sources of finances, obtaining student visas, procedure that lasts between a few weeks and a few months!??!
- The professors encounter difficulties regarding the accomplishment of the Institutional Contract, especially in what concerns the mobility, because foreign students are reluctant in coming to study in Romania.
- Difficulties are encountered because of the academic curricula and because of the incompatibilities between higher education systems in the partner countries. So, at the same time, a lot of work must be done in order to harmonize these systems. A solution could be the development of the ECTS.
- There are a lot of problems because it is hard to find suitable accommodation for foreign students and because of: the scarce modern communication facilities (Internet, e-mail), the dense and hard academic curricula, the difficult relationship with the secretariats of the faculties, the access to libraries, the lack of a program to accommodate foreign students who come to study in Romania. Another minus could be the inadequate promotion of the Romanian academic system in Europe.
- There is a lack of communication with the participants in the program and with the student organizations, a weak student involvement in the Erasmus offices from the different faculties, and no instruction programs for those who want to get involved. The student organizations are not represented in the Erasmus National Council.
- As a cause of the fact that the program is at the beginning, there are plenty of problems, but we hope that, with the establishment of the new Socrates II program, things will improve, in the sense that there will be more money available and more partnerships will be accomplished. The first step in informing the students has already been made due to AEGEE activity.

## **AEGEE WARSAW**

### **POLAND - A NEW PARTNER IN THE SOCRATES PROGRAM**

The program of Socrates Action Day in Warsaw consisted of a panel discussion about Socrates program attended by Mr. W. Sienkiewicz, director of Socrates program within the Ministry of National Education, Mrs. E. Fonberng-Stokulska, head of the International Co-operation Department at Warsaw School of Economics, Mrs. Salomon, Head of Economics Department at the University of Warsaw, one hundred students from different Warsaw Universities.

Among others, we discussed about qualifications a student should have in order to participate in the Socrates program. For example, at the Warsaw School of Economics, the most important criteria besides language skills are the interest in the program and the extra-curricular activity, while at the Warsaw University, the main criteria is the academic students' achievement. The data we are presenting below have been collected from 26 students studying in Warsaw who would like to study abroad:

- “ 73% are members of a student organization. Half of them attended before a scientific conference.
- “ Sources of information concerning possibilities of studying abroad are friends, leaflets, brochures, International Co-operation Departments located in Universities.
- “ The most frequently desired period of time for studying abroad is one semester.
- “ The language in which students would like to study is English (77%), and the most popular countries are England and the Netherlands.
- “ The main difficulties and problems that students are afraid to face during their study abroad, are the financial ones. (62%)

## **AEGEE DEBRECEN**

### **SIMPLIFICATION OF ADMINISTRATION**

On the 12th November 1998, AEGEE-Debrecen organized an informative lecture on the basic structure of Socrates program. The main ideas that arise from our debate are the following:

- “ The improvement of the opportunities for language learning: students should speak at least two languages, especially in the field of science where the most commonly used language is English.
- “ The problem of reciprocity - the receiving capacity of Hungarian universities; In many cases the number of students sent from a university is not corresponding with the number of Erasmus students received by the same university, since most of the students choose a country with a widely spoken language. Therefore, many universities, like those of Hungary receive fewer students than they could.
- “ The improvement of the financial background of the program: Socrates/Erasmus program should finance the travel costs and costs of living of the Erasmus students. The regional differences in living conditions, should be taken into account, while distributing money granted to the program.
- “ Faster decision making on institutional applications. The decision making process should be accelerated on institutional applications handed in by universities to Brussels. The main problem resulting from this situation is that universities have to select Erasmus students, before knowing exactly how many places will be guaranteed.
- “ Simplification of administration; According to the Rector of Kossuth University a more direct contact should be established between universities and Brussels and the role of National Socrates Agencies should be re-evaluated in this process.

# **Le point de vue des étudiants**

## **Un rapport commun sur la proposition de la Commission Européenne dans le domaine de l'éducation " SOCRATES "**

**par AEGEE, ESIB et ESN.**

Nous sommes globalement content de la proposition soumise par la Commission Européenne sur la deuxième phase du programme SOCRATES. La ligne directrice de la Commission qui, à la fois préserve et réforme le programme bien motivée, et nous sommes particulièrement heureux de noter l'ouverture du programme au pays associés des Pays d'Europe Centrale et Orientale (PECO). Chypre, Turquie et Malte.

Nous accueillons favorablement l'intérêt porté à l'Education tout au long de la vie. Nous voudrions insister sur l'importance de la mobilité physique des étudiants et du corps enseignant. Cette partie du programme SOCRATES ayant reçu un succès important est, selon notre opinion, plus importante que jamais surtout en connexion avec l'ouverture du programme à d'autres pays.

Nous apprécions aussi les simplifications qui ont été apportées au programme. Néanmoins, il est difficile d'apprécier dans quelle mesure elles seront reflétées dans le traitement administratif journalier et plus particulièrement comment un haut degré d'engagement de la part des participants pourra être assuré.

Nous insistons sur le fait que SOCRATES doit continuer à être un programme d'éducation, bien que prenant en compte les exigences du marché du travail. Nous pensons que la mobilité physique forme les étudiants pour leur vie personnelle, culturelle, sociale et professionnelle.

La fonctionnalité du nouveau programme doit être suivie de près. Si une partie du programme ne fonctionnait pas correctement, il devrait être possible de la réformer. Dans le cadre de ce processus, l'opinion des participants au programme et des associations les représentants devra revêtir une importance toute particulière. En particulier l'efficacité de la décentralisation devra être assurée.

Dans ce document, nous allons nous développer quatre thématiques qu'AEGEE, ESIB et ESN considèrent comme étant hautement importantes dans le développement du programme SOCRATES.

- Financement de SOCRATES
- Ouverture aux PECO, à Chypre, à la Turquie et à Malte
- Participation de représentants étudiants
- Le Système de Transfert de Crédits Européens (ECTS)

## **Financement de SOCRATES**

Nous apprécions la proposition d'augmentation du budget mais nous sommes cependant profondément inquiet du fait que cela ne sera encore pas suffisant.

Nous voyons la subvention ERASMUS comme un outil important pour l'établissement d'une plus grande égalité socio-économique des étudiants de l'éducation supérieure. Nous sommes plus spécialement inquiet en ce qui concerne le futur des échanges d'étudiants originaires des PEKO si les bourses d'études ne sont pas suffisamment augmentées. La petitesse de la subvention moyenne est, comme mentionné dans la proposition de la Commission, un des obstacles majeurs à la mobilité physique. Nous considérons l'évaluation actuelle de la situation socio-économique des étudiants ERASMUS comme un point important des futures discussions à ce sujet, et sommes désireux de participer au recherches sur comment la situation pourraient être améliorée.

Selon nous, ce n'est pas seulement les bourses de mobilité qui sont insuffisamment financées mais le programme SOCRATES dans son ensemble. Nous sommes particulièrement concerné par le fait que l'un des meilleurs et plus appréciés des programmes de la Communauté Européenne soit considérablement affaibli par le manque de fonds. Le financement global accordé aux programme de Jeunesse et d'éducation devrait atteindre 1% du budget total de la Communauté Européenne.

## **Ouverture aux PEKO, à Chypre, à la Turquie et à Malte.**

L'élargissement du groupe de pays participant à SOCRATES est accueillie chaleureusement et nous avons confiance dans le fait que ce processus continuera dans le but d'inclure tous les pays Européens. Cependant, nous espérons que ce processus aura toujours le respect le plus grand pour les différences de cultures et d'histoires des pays impliqués ainsi que la structure de leur système éducatif. De plus, nous insistons sur le besoin de prise en considération des problèmes qui apparaîtront en conséquences des différences de niveau de vie. Dans ce cadre, les obstacles précédemment mentionnés qui pourraient être provoqués par une bourse ERASMUS faible nécessitent une attention particulière.

## **Participation active des représentants étudiants.**

Quand la Communauté Européenne crée des programmes pour ses citoyens, l'opinion de ces derniers devrait être prise en considération avec attention au cours de ce processus.

Ainsi, étant les plus concernés par la qualité et la justesse de l'éducation qu'ils reçoivent, les étudiants devraient être consultés de façon permanente. Nous aimerions donc appeler à une plus grande ouverture et participation des représentants étudiants à tous les niveaux de développement des programmes de mobilité.

Nous apprécions la suggestion faite dans le cadre des mesures complémentaires. Nous la considérons comme un possibilité d'encourager un haut degré d'activités transnationale par les associations d'Etudiants et de jeunesse ainsi que par d'autres corps non-gouvernementaux. Ceci a été difficile jusqu'à présent et ce particulièrement pour les associations étudiantes et de jeunesse en raison des fonds insuffisants qui leur étaient octroyés.

Nous apprécions la décentralisation du programme cependant, nous sommes inquiets du fait que dans certains pays, les structures nationales aient des contacts très limités avec les représentants étudiants.

Nous aimerais par conséquent avoir de plus amples précisions sur la façon dont les participants au programme seront représentés au niveau local, national et européen. Dans le but d'être compétent au sujet du programme SOCRATES, il est de la plus grande importance que les étudiants soient intégrés dans le processus de décision et de mise en place du programme. De plus, en tant qu'associations européennes d'étudiants, nous souhaiterions obtenir plus d'ouverture dans le travail des Comités et Sous-Comités SOCRATES sur l'éducation supérieure. En effet, nous considérons que notre travail et celui des Comités précités serait grandement enrichis par une telle coopération.

Nous considérons qu'une plus grande attention est nécessaire quant à l'accueil et à l'intégration des étudiants ou professeurs étrangers dans l'institution hôte. Un coopération constructive entre les institutions d'éducation supérieure et les associations locales d'étudiants (comme AEGEE, ESN ou les associations locales) revêt une importance capitale. Nous aimerais voir par conséquent, un encouragement dans le but d'insérer ces conditions dans le cadre officiel du programme.

### **ECTS - Système de transfert des Crédits Européens**

Le système ECTS a été vital dans le processus d'amélioration de la reconnaissance académique et nous encourageons la diffusion plus ample encore de ce système. Cependant, les étudiants sont de plus en plus concernés par le fait que la recherche d'une reconnaissance totale a endommagé la réputation des cours reçus dans le cadre d'un séjour ERASMUS. Nous aimerais qu'une discussion constructive et active soit engagée sur la qualité au sein d'ECTS et sur sa préservation. De même, nous insistons sur le fait que les étudiants ont souvent une influence positive dans le cadre de la sauvegarde de cette qualité.

De plus, nous aimerais que des mesures soient prises afin d'obtenir la reconnaissance des qualifications linguistiques et interculturelle qui sont acquises de façon certaines en résultat de la mobilité physique.



## **ESIB**

### **By Antti Pentikäinen, Chairperson of ESIB in 1999**

ESIB is very happy to get this opportunity to share its opinion on SOCRATES with other partners and decision-makers in Europe.

ESIB - The National Unions of Students in Europe is an organization, which exists since 1982 to promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level towards all-relevant organizations and institutions. ESIB currently has 35 members coming from 29 countries.

#### ESIB on SOCRATES

***Good results but too few resources*** - ESIB has taken strong interest in the evaluation of the Socrates - Erasmus program. The program has proven to be one of the most efficient and effective EU programs. Erasmus is one of the main reasons for the positive development of internationalization of higher education in Europe. After these very positive results it has been a surprise that the Member States seem to be reluctant allocating sufficient funds for SOCRATES II to be able to successfully respond to the growing need and potential of the program. The evaluations of the program have clearly showed that the student mobility grant by no means corresponds to the actual costs for exchange students – this endangers creating a social bias - only allowing more wealthy students to go on exchange courses.

***Student's representation*** - The democratic and representative organizations that represent the target groups of the program should be taken more into account when discussing and developing the program. It is important that the EU respects the democratically structured organizations that work through democratic representation from local through national to European level. This respect would show the EUs genuine commitment to real democracy.

***ECTS - European Credit Transfer System*** - The ECTS system is a tool to improve student mobility in Europe. But there are especially two dimensions, which need to be developed:

- 1) ECTS should be used at all Higher Education institutions and
- 2) The system itself does not have any use if the outcome - better recognition - is not achieved.

# **ESN**

## **By Elke Resch, President of ESN international**

On behalf of Erasmus Student Network (ESN), I would like to thank AEGEE-Europe for giving us this opportunity to present our point of view concerning the SOCRATES programme. It has been one of our main concerns to initiate a fruitful co-operation among important European student organizations and we are therefore especially pleased that a joint statement of AEGEE, ESIB and ESN, on the second phase of SOCRATES could be presented to the European Commission in September 1998.

### **Erasmus Student Network**

In 1989, two years after the approval of ERASMUS as an exchange programme, the Erasmus Bureau invited a few former Erasmus students to an evaluation meeting in Belgium. This initiated the idea of the Erasmus Student Network, in order to help international student's counter practical problems during their stay at a host university via the system "students help international students". In 1990 the founding meeting of ESN was organized, in Copenhagen, with participants from nearly all the EU member states and the Erasmus Student Network became a legal association. Erasmus Student Network, as a strictly non-political and non-religious pan-European network works towards providing its services to all exchange students studying in Europe.

Approaching its 10th Anniversary ESN is becoming more professional and we try to combine the original aims (improvement of the social and practical integration of guest students, provision of information about exchange programmes and utilization of experiences from former exchange students) with new challenges: Defending the rights of exchange students, evaluation of exchange programmes, and provide information, out of our daily experience, to decision making bodies.

### **ESN and SOCRATES**

We are generally pleased with the SOCRATES programme, and in particular with the very positive influence it has had on increasing physical mobility. However the insufficient funding for the programme has become a major obstacle especially for the ERASMUS action. We fear that this action will be seriously jeopardized if the funds are not sufficiently increased.

Recognition of qualifications, obtained abroad, is a necessity of Mobility. The implementation of ECTS has been an important improvement, however we see a growing concern among Exchange Students that the credits obtained through ECTS are not as appreciated as credits obtained otherwise. We would therefore like to see a development, which can improve the way credits are evaluated in order to obtain the desired appreciation.

For us it's essential that the users of the programme become more involved in its development. We hence call for more openness as well as a higher degree of interaction with the students participating.

# **Le defi de SOCRATES s'ouvrir vers une réelle communication**

Le programme SOCRATES a toujours été au centre des préoccupations d'AEGEE depuis sa création en 1987. AEGEE a grandi en même temps qu'ERASMUS, devenu depuis SOCRATES, et comme un grand frère, AEGEE a depuis un an décidé de participer activement à l'éducation de SOCRATES.

Le transfert du savoir de ceux qui ont l'expérience vers les nouveaux arrivants est toujours plus ou moins aisée et depuis un an, AEGEE se confronte à des oreilles plus ou moins attentives à nos doléances.

AEGEE représente les étudiants, ceux qui chaque année bénéficient, ou en rêvent seulement, des bienfaits du programme SOCRATES. Bien sûr, nous sommes plus directement concernés par l'action ERASMUS plus que par les autres et pourtant, comme dans tout domaine éducatif, toutes les actions du programme SOCRATES sont interdépendantes les unes des autres. De même, la Commission Européenne, les Ministères de l'éducation des différents pays de l'Union et les étudiants de toute l'Europe sont interdépendants.

AEGEE apporte donc la vision, non bureaucratique et non intellectualisée, des étudiants qui vivent sur le terrain la mise en place du programme SOCRATES.

En tant que coordonatrice du SOCRATES Action 97, ce qui me frappe aujourd'hui est la récurrence avec laquelle les mêmes problèmes ressurgissent dans l'évaluation menée cette année. Rien de bien nouveau donc n'a été découvert, aucune carte au trésor qui nous indique où se trouve LA faute initiale par qui toutes les autres erreurs sont arrivées. De fait, AEGEE n'a jamais eu la prétention de jouer le rôle du rédempteur. Notre ambition, depuis un an est plus d'oeuvrer comme acteur permanent de l'évolution du programme SOCRATES.

Dans chaque antenne, selon l'accueil qui nous est réservé par les autorités locales, nous agissons bien au-delà du simple accueil des étudiants ERASMUS. Des membres d'AEGEE sont présents dans les universités pour aider à disséminer l'information qui semble-t-il a toujours autant de mal à circuler.

C'est d'ailleurs ce qui est frappant dans les résultats obtenus cette année, l'étonnante similitude avec les problèmes mis à jour l'an dernier déjà. Il est clair que lorsque l'on prends en compte un programme aussi important que SOCRATES, impliquant une administration aussi énorme et peu flexible, il est difficile de changer drastiquement l'état des choses en juste une année, et cela sans changement majeur dans la structure.

Ainsi, le démarrage du nouveau cru SOCRATES à partir de l'an 2000 sera-t-il particulièrement important pour le devenir du programme.

Les deux problèmes principaux sont donc:

- les fonds alloués, insuffisant bien sûr, non seulement pour les étudiants qui partent en échange ERASMUS, mais aussi pour les universités en général qui ne peuvent faire face aux besoins en personnel imposés par une mise en place appropriée du programme.
- L'information et plus généralement la communication entre tous les acteurs du programme.

Depuis un an déjà, AEGEE suggère que l'utilisation des Nouvelles Technologies de l'Information soit intensifiées dans le cadre de la gestion administrative du programme SOCRATES.

La Commission Européenne devraient être la première à utiliser les avantages en terme de flexibilité et de décentralisation du travail qu'offre Internet.

Puisque le manque de moyen, et de temps, est flagrant au sein des administrations concernées, qu'elles soient universitaires, nationales ou communautaires, il est temps désormais de décharger d'une partie de la gestion administratives toutes ces entités.

La conception d'un programme informatique approprié, accessible sur internet et où chaque étudiant pourraient intégrer les informations qu'il détient, par expérience, sur les différentes universités d'accueil, sur la qualité des cours qui y sont dispensés et sur les facilités extra-universitaires (logement, déplacement, etc...) seraient un outil faramineux en terme de transmission de l'information. La responsabilité d'intégrer ces informations ne reposeraient sur les universités que dans la mesure où elles devraient organiser, pour les étudiants, l'accès à un ordinateur où ces derniers pourront rentrer les données.

Bien sûr, un tel pas vers la décentralisation impliquerait une réelle ouverture d'esprit de la part de la Commission mais aussi des différents Ministères, universités, professeurs etc... Mais la remise en question qui sera provoquée par une telle ouverture à l'information ne pourra être que bénéfique à tous les acteurs du monde de l'éducation, ceux qui la font et ceux qui en profitent.

Les étudiants ne demandent qu'à être responsabilisés et à pouvoir jouer un rôle actif dans la conception et la réalisation de leur éducation. Depuis quelques temps, ils demandent à être considérés comme de réels partenaires comme cela a été démontré au cours de la Conférence Mondiale sur l'éducation supérieure organisée par l'UNESCO en Octobre 98. Comme tout changement, celui-ci représente un risque et nécessitera du temps avant de pouvoir être réellement efficace mais l'enjeu est important et pourrait signifier une réelle avancée non seulement dans l'optimisation du programme SOCRATES mais aussi dans la mise en place de la politique de transparence de la Commission Européenne.

Hélène Berard  
Coordinatrice SOCRATES Action Day 1997  
Présidente sortante AEGEE Europe

## **The challenge for SOCRATES: to open itself to a true communication process**

The SOCRATES program has always been one of the core concerns of AEGEE since its creation in 1987. AEGEE has grown up along the ERASMUS program, which became SOCRATES since then, and like an older brother, AEGEE has decided for one year to take an active part into the education of SOCRATES.

The knowledge transfer of the experienced ones to the new comers is always more or less easy and for one year, AEGEE confronted itself to people who were more or less willing to ear our comments.

AEGEE represents the students, the ones whom, each year, benefit from the SOCRATES program, or only dream about it. Of course we are more concerned by the ERASMUS action rather than by the other ones but still, as like in all education domain, all actions of the SOCRATES program are interwoven.

Identically, the European Commission, the Member Countries Ministries of Education and the students from all over Europe are interwoven.

AEGEE brings a non-bureaucratic and non-intellectualized vision from students who experiment on the ground the implementation of the SOCRATES program.

Being the coordinator of the SOCRATES Action Day 97, what strikes me today is the similitude between the evaluation made last year and the results we obtained this year. Nothing bright new has been discovered, no treasure map pointing on THE original mistake which provoked all

others. In fact, AEGEE never pretended to be the Messiah. Our ambition for one year has been to be a permanent actor of the SOCRATES program evolution.

In each antenna, depending on the way the local authorities welcomed us, we are acting much further than for the welcoming of foreign students. AEGEE members are present in universities to help spreading the information, which seems to have so many problems to circulate properly. What is the most striking in these year results is this similitude with the problems already uncovered last year. Considering such a heavy program as SOCRATES is, it is clear that it implies such a big and inflexible administration that it is difficult to drastically change it in just one year and this without any major change in the structure.

Therefore, the launching of the new brand of the SOCRATES program in 2000 will be particularly important for the future of the program.

The two main problems are:

The allocated funds, insufficient of course, not only for the students going on ERASMUS abroad but also for the universities in general which cannot face the cost of the human resources needed for a proper implementation of the program.

The information, and generally the communication between all the actors of the program.

For one year already, AEGEE has been suggesting that the New Information Technologies should be used more intensely in the frame of the administrative management of the SOCRATES program.

The European Commission should be the first one to use the advantages offered by Internet in term of flexibility and decentralization of the workload.

Since the lack of funds and time is so obvious for the European, national or university administrations, it is high time to outsource part of the administrative workload.

The conception of the computer program, accessible on Internet and where each student could fill in the information he detains by experience, about the host universities, the courses quality and the external facilities (accommodation, transport, etc.) would be a powerful tool in term of information spreading. The responsibility of integrating these data would lie on universities only for the fact that they should provide for students an access to a computer.

Of course, such a step towards decentralization would imply a really open-minded approach from the Commission but also from Ministries, universities, professors, etc.

But the self-questioning provoked by such an action could only bring benefice to all actors of the education world, those who make it and those who use it.

Students are truly willing to be given more responsibilities and to be able to play an active role in the conception and implementation of their education. For some times, they request to be considered as real stakeholders as it was proven during the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in October 98. As for every move, this one implies a risk and will need time before being really able to be efficient but the stake is important and it could bring a real improvement in the optimization of the SOCRATES program, but also in the implementation of the transparency policy of the European Commission.

Hélène Berard  
SOCRATES Action Day 97 Coordinator  
Former AEGEE Europe President

# AEGEE – Size, Structure and Activities

Members: 20,000 (students and young professionals from every field)

Active members: 1500 (5-7 members in each local AEGEE - CD)

Finance: The European Commission, The Council of Europe, and national and local institutions, Sponsors, membership fees, participation fees to different events

Structure: Every spring and every autumn, AEGEE organizes a General Assembly (Agora), during which, 9 members of the Comité Directeur (CD) of AEGEE-Europe are elected, members coming from at least 5 different countries. Presently, the members of the CD come from 7 different countries.

Objective: The aim of AEGEE is the promotion of the European integration and Co-operation among young people, especially the students.

Nature: A non-governmental, non-profit, financially independent, irreligious and apolitical association

Principles: Democracy, tolerance, transparency and efficiency

Domains: 3 pillars: European education, EU enlargement, European citizenship.

Area of activity: Europe (mainly)

Methods: AEGEE does not take into consideration any national level of the association, thus offering the possibility of a direct co-operation between the local and the European levels.

Means: European projects, Case studies, Summer Universities, conferences, seminars, reports, books, meetings with personalities, Internet, Press releases.

Official acknowledgment: A special statute regarding the relations with the UN

A special statute regarding the relations with the Council of Europe, with UNESCO and with the OSCE

Relations with the press: Most of the AEGEE event are mentioned in the local, national and European press (e.g.: Europe Agency, Europolitique, European Voice)

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