



Youth's Eye on Sustainability

**A Guide to Sustainable Development
and Results Booklet of *Sustaining our Future*,
AEGEE Flagship Project 2008–2009**



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What is AEGEE?



AEGEE is the largest interdisciplinary pan-European network of students and youth, spanning more than **230** local organisations (called **antennae**) in different European university cities, with a total membership of around 15 000. These are spread in 42 European countries; however, the association has no national level.

Founded in 1985, AEGEE strives towards increasing connectedness amongst students, along the ideal of European integration, thus, working towards removing mental and physical borders, while promoting mutual tolerance and understanding across borders and cultures. This allows the association to boast of a large pool of internationally-oriented students with intercultural communication skills and experience in project and organisational management.

AEGEE-Europe is supported by the **European Commission**, enjoys participatory status at the **Council of Europe**, consultative status at the **United Nations through ECOSOC**, operational status with **UNESCO** in its international projects, and is member of the **European Youth Forum** and the **European Movement (International)**. This allows it to have a significant impact on civil society institutions, both on local and regional levels, such as with authorities and universities, as well as on the European and international levels, in Brussels and beyond.

AEGEE operates in four Main Fields of Action:

- Higher Education
- Peace and Stability
- Cultural Exchange
- Active Citizenship

More than 400 conferences, cultural events and exchanges are organised yearly to promote these values and make it possible for more than 10 000 young people to explore distant territories and cultures of Europe.

Among AEGEE's patrons are: **Mikhael Gorbachev**, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize; **Václav Havel**, former President of the Czech Republic; **Dr. E. Fenech Adami**, Former President of the Republic of Malta; **Catherine Lalumière**, Former Secretary, General of the Council of Europe and Member of the European Parliament; **György Konrád**, President of the German Academy of Arts; and **Romano Prodi**, former President of the European Commission; as well **Dr. Josep Maria Bricall**, Former President of the Conference of European Rectors; **Kenneth J. Edwards**, President of the Conference of European Rectors; and **Eric Froment**, President of the European University Association.

Foreword by President of AEGEE-Europe

Sustainable development is not just a new way of thinking or only a way of behaviour, but it is a new movement, a new philosophy and a new hope. The exploitation of natural resources becomes more and more apparent every day and has a greater effect on our lives. If we do not do something, it will continue to show bad effects on many future generations.

Sustainable development is an ethical challenge and I am particularly glad that AEGEE with its 25-year long history of addressing important topics towards creating a shared sense of European Identity, decided to make endeavours to take an active role in this process.

The flagship project of AEGEE called, *Sustaining our Future* aimed to involve the European Youth and give it a better understanding of the complex interdependence between human needs and the natural environment, between socio-economic development and culture by variety of local, intermediate and European level activities. Although we may be content with the path we have taken and be proud of how far we have come, we are well aware that there are still many environmental problems and challenges in the future to be tackled.

In my opinion, the promotion of sustainable development should concern each and every one of us in our daily life. All of our actions, our habits and our behaviours have an immediate impact on the preservation of our environment and on the sustainable development of our societies and humanity as a whole.

In 2008, the European Parliament and the Foundation of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen declared *Sustaining our Future* a national winner in the Charlemagne Youth Prize competition recognising the work and dedication of the AEGEE members involved in the flagship project towards the challenges of sustainability.

The past two years were not only about awareness-raising, but also about taking a concrete action to see our organisation act more sustainably, by inspiring organisers of other events. Dozens of AEGEE volunteers invested their time and energy to organise local activities in a frame of the European Day of Environment across Europe. A special part of the project was a Youth Think Tank *Create and In(ter)novate* that brought 50 young people to Brussels, where they were generating and defining innovative and workable ideas on how to solve the existing problems. It is a demonstration of how we “walk the talk” when it comes to sustainability and includes concrete examples of how we play our role as agents of change in our communities and societies to contribute to environmental outcomes. The project has finished, but AEGEE should and will remain involved in this issue, as a youth organisation which can take an active role in advocating for better environmental policies.

I hope you go through the next pages and have a close look at what *Sustaining our Future* project really did and see them as your signpost to a safer and more sustainable future. It will be those who take action to promote sustainable living solutions. We can change our today, little by little, person by person and with that obtain a more sustainable tomorrow for generations to come.



Start today! Be sustainable!

Agata Patecka
President of AEGEE-Europe



Dear Reader,

The booklet you have in your hands is the result of the first attempt of AEGEE to explore sustainable development. The *Sustaining our Future* project was born at the AEGEE general assembly Agora Valletta in April of 2007. We had the bold aim to tackle a topic which was very wide on one hand and rather unknown to AEGEE on the other.

At first it seemed so difficult to try to point the right part in this huge concept of sustainable development. But then we came to the simple conclusion:

Sustainability lies in diversity. So does the essence of AEGEE.

The project aimed to put together these two diversities. There are many aspects in sustainability, many ways to move towards it. Our project wanted to show how sustainability is seen and tackled in different parts of Europe, from Scandinavia to Mediterranean, how local conditions play a big role in achieving one global aim.

We set out to:

- **Raise understanding** of the importance of sustainable living environment among European youth and their communities at large.
- **Involve** European youth **into discussion** and creation of sustainable living solutions for European societies.
- **Act on and promote** sustainable living solutions to increase personal and social environmental responsibility.

The saying “this is not the end, it’s just the beginning” has never been more right. *Sustaining our Future* or like we call it – SuFu – introduced something new to AEGEE and it only marks the start

of a longer integration of sustainability into youth organisations. Changing a mindset is one of the hardest things, that doesn’t change in a year or two. We only made a small start and we can hope changes will continue in people.

With this booklet we are both showing what we did over these last two years, as well as giving small insight into the background and different aspects surrounding sustainable development. We hope it will also help you keep discovering the topics on your own. In a way, this booklet is the last step towards achieving our project’s aims.

Though information on these pages focuses mainly on what **we learned** about sustainability; there is something that might not be so apparent – the great time we had while designing, organising and participating in these activities. The great people we met along the way and became friends with, the adventures, emotions, experiences, challenges, lessons, memories. We set out to tackle a big issue, and to do it the only way possible – through personal development and impact.

In the end, the meaning of sustainability comes down to very simple ideas:

- pay attention to things around you,
- take care of them,
- think through what influences what,
- act in a way which is good for your real needs,
- and for others around you.

I guess the feeling I have about this project, can be described with the words of J.W. Goethe:

“Only those, who take up unreal tasks, can discover something real.”

“The best way to predict the future... is to create it.”

Alan Kay, American computer scientist





The Energy of Youth to Sustain Our Future

The phrase ‘sustainable development’ has become part and parcel of our daily vocabulary and today this expression is utilised by people coming from all walks of life and by politicians belonging to the whole spectrum of the political arena. The problem, however, is that different people tend to interpret this expression in different ways.

For many, the accent is on ‘development’, which is interpreted as “growth”, actually unlimited growth, with strong emphasis on the economic dimension. Others tend to emphasise the word ‘sustainable’, which in practice means ensuring that any type of growth should be subjected to the social and environmental conditions prevailing in the said environment. I form part of the second group of persons.

We have had so many examples of malpractices in the recent past that one would think that humankind has learnt from its mistakes and is therefore now united in forming a common front in favour of sustainable practices. **And yet this is not the case.**

Just think of the big ongoing debate on climate change. Whichever part of the world we are living in, we are all experiencing great changes in what were once cyclic patterns of nature. Nowadays, it would seem that the four seasons have been reduced to two: spring and autumn seem to have disappeared, and we are subjected to the extremes of either freezing weather on one hand or strong droughts on the other. The end result is that we have millions of people all over the planet suffering under inhumane conditions, with the weakest amongst them – women, chil-

dren and senior citizens – being the ones to suffer most.

And yet, despite such blatant evidence of the (negative!) change we are going through, we still find strong lobby groups intent on pushing the idea that global warming is just a global scam and that the loss of precious lives and of biodiversity all over the planet is just a natural consequence of what could be termed inevitable collateral damage. Despite all the international hype concerning global warming, we have just witnessed a big flop resulting from the summit held in Copenhagen last December.

The Copenhagen summit could have really brought about a big change in our life-styles. But this was not to be. Two big economic superpowers – China and the US – had a pre-summit meeting and, over a cup of tea, decided to restrict the goals that the whole summit was aiming at. The European Union, which had presented itself with the ambitious goal of reducing emissions by 30% by the year 2020, in the end gave up the whole project, with each individual country just thinking of its own immediate national needs. Basically, everything has been postponed to a later date, unfortunately an unspecified one, some time in the future.

The same attitude of nonchalance was taken with regards to the depletion of fish stocks in our seas. For years, scientists had been warning that, e.g. blue fin tuna would disappear from the face of the Earth if unsustainable methods of fishing continued prevailing. Yet for all these years, governments and the EU Commission resisted strong cuts in the tuna fishing quotas. The end result of

this myopic resistance is that now we have been forced to adopt a total ban on tuna fishing and the ones who will suffer most will be those fishermen who have always stuck to traditional and sustainable methods of fishing.

The net losers in this game called “let’s bypass sustainability” are the weakest and most vulnerable strata of society all over the world: the small islands threatened by the rise in the levels of the seas might not live another day to be able to cry out their plight; the children and women escaping typhoons and hurricanes – or actually falling victims to them – will be destined to live the rest of their lives in misery; the animal wildlife that is being destroyed through the escalation of desertification in the south or the melting of glaciers in the north will contribute the increasing lack of balance in our planet’s biodiversity.

It would seem that politicians have totally failed in redressing the wrongs that are conditioning the life of our planet and peoples. Maybe we, politicians, taken up as we are by profound political debates, **have lost touch with the real everyday concerns** of the normal women and men who need to guarantee a basic minimum of clothing, food and shelter to their children. At the stage where politicians might have failed, it would be useful that we put our trust in the younger generations, asking them to lead the way.

Youths are definitively more sensitive to the positive connotations of ‘sustainable development’ because they are amongst the first victims of unsustainable practices and they suffer the direct consequences of these malpractices. When recently

whole villages in Sicily or Calabria started collapsing because of the landslides that resulted from years of irresponsible deforestation, young people were amongst those that suffered most; when schools collapse because unscrupulous speculators use defective building materials in dangerous earthquake zones like Concepcion in Chile, it is young people who die; when an uncontrolled market economy is left to supposedly regulate itself, and then collapses, it is young people looking for a first job who are mostly hit by the recession.

That is why the **real experts** on “future change” **are youths themselves**: they are old enough to have experienced the negative aspects of an uncontrolled free market, but they are also young enough to be able to plan a better future for all humankind, with a great dose of enthusiasm that might be lacking in the older generations.

In the face of rising xenophobia all over Europe, it is today’s youth that can show us the way forward in respect of diversity, cultural and otherwise; it is our youngsters who can teach us all how to lead a sustainable life-style based on the proper use of renewable energies and materials and guided by the four Rs philosophy; it is our youngsters who can further strengthen the concept of gender democracy and the participatory role of civil society in the democratic structures of our common European home.

The project here presented by AEGEE is a concrete and living example of the “**unrefrainable positive energy**” that youth can put into any ‘sustainable development’ project.

Arnold Cassola

Arnold Cassola is a Maltese-Italian politician, an Associate Professor in Comparative Literature at the University of Malta and the author and editor of various books and academic papers. He has been a member of the Italian Parliament and Secretary General of the European Green Party, based in Brussels. Arnold Cassola is currently AD-Malta Green Party Spokesperson on EU and International Affairs.



Eero Paloheimo

Eero Paloheimo is a Finnish academican who has worked as a designer, politician and university professor. He has written nine books discussing environmental issues and the future and numerous articles in journals. He has doctoral degrees from both Munich University of Technology and Helsinki University of Technology. Eero Paloheimo is currently involved in designing ecological cities in China.

World Crisis, Future and Youth

The character of Crisis

Today, everybody speaks of the climate change although it should be called the climate catastrophe. Unfortunately that catastrophe is not the only problem. Parallel to it we have a bunch of other environmental dangers; lack of water, shortage of clean energy and as the final and most dramatic consequence of all these: the extinction of species, the radical impoverishment of the whole biosphere. All this is well known to educated and enlightened people today.

Simultaneously, but not independently we have the economical and social problems. Mainly the developing countries suffer from them: the famines, diseases, wars, violence and urbanisation. The mass migrations all over the world is not the real medicine, they only move the problems from one district to another. So we can speak of two bundles of problems which are not independent of each other. In fact they mostly support one another and this leads to a labile condition. The process is accelerating.

The common and general reason to both of these problem-bundles is the explosive population growth that has taken place during the last decades. So we have come into a situation, which is critical and radical actions are needed. We are in a hurry.

Possible actions

Apparently the industrial countries have three ways to tackle the bundle of problems. The first of these is to create a totally new production machinery, a new kind of industry. We should renew

the energy production so that no un-renewable resources are utilised and no emissions created. This means large fields of solar panels, windmills and geothermic energy. We need a new kind of traffic, where cars of today are considered totally old-fashioned. Our production and design of new products should be based mainly on the recycling processes and our forestry and agriculture should be renewed on a sustainable basis.

Simply said, a new industrial revolution is needed. By that the sustainability and the rights of future generations should be considered as the most important issue of the new development. But youth cannot influence this development much. This is a solution that must be created by scientists and industry. The politicians can help by support and new kind of legislation, but that is only a framework to create the possibilities for all reforms.

Second possibility is to renew the nature with gigantic efforts. One example is forestation of the Sahara desert. This is possible by global co-operation, one part of the action being the desalination of sea-water. This is expensive but it is not at all as expensive as e.g. the wars have been. The project could be realised using all armies of the world. The forestation of the Sahara desert is only one example of gigantic international efforts to renew the nature somehow to the stage in which it has been thousands of years ago.

Another great effort may be mentioned – worldwide family planning programme. Then all the countries in the world would follow China's one-child policy which should continue for two or three generations. This would be very important

e.g. for Africa today. Otherwise the whole continent will be in a catastrophic situation in some decades. These kinds of solutions are of course sacrifices but would benefit the future generations; not as big sacrifices as wars are.

These gigantic solutions are international, worldwide and basically political. Youth can not realise these projects.

Third possibility is not to influence the production or try to renew the circumstances to something that has existed in the past. This third possibility can be realised simultaneously with the others, but representatives of industry and commerce as well as the politicians are not willing to do this. This is something for youth.

Youth's role

Third possibility is to completely change the lifestyle. Don't consume so much!

Elderly people do not change their lifestyle easily. They are used to a high living standard and their values are inheritance from the earlier generations. In the past, the economic growth was an absolute, indisputable virtue and wealth was a kind of target. The change of the attitude for most elderly is a sign of failure.

Young people do not carry this burden. They have the possibility to change the attitude in respect of glamour, unnecessary richness and the status created by material, luxurious objects. A big, fancy car is a sign of stupidity. Too large apartment is simply an unnecessary disadvantage. To drive a bicycle is intelligent and healthy. To conform to the changes of fashion and to buy new clothes twice a year is a clear sign of dependence and a serious restriction to ones freedom. To having too many children is not responsible behaviour considering the future generations. All this is basically **choosing of values**. Who are respected people?

The various ways to tackle the environmental crisis is in the same time a question between older and younger generations. The right attitude towards this debate is not contempt but respect. We are all on the same sinking boat and all measures need to be taken.

War declaration

In the past many wars have been fought. Their character has been the same: people against people, tribe against tribe, family against family. The wars have changed the circumstances in the world more effectively and quicker than the peaceful progress has. This is why we need a new war, but a new kind of war.

This war is a defensive fight in which whole mankind should participate. The defended groups are the future generations. The enemy is the environmental and social crisis threatening our planet.

This war must be fought on three fronts. Firstly, large global actions must begin. To realise this, the armies of all nations must join. Those actions must be fulfilled with the same effectiveness as the actions in traditional wars. Secondly, we need a new industrial revolution. For that a good will of politicians and industry is needed. The basic goals of production and products must be restricted with new requirements; sustainability and cleanness. Thirdly, new and more serious, deeper values than earlier are needed. This is the slowest of the processes. The steps of changes are generations. But this also is possible.

The three parts of the actions have the same target, to save the planet. They must co-operate, not debate. Youth has the most important role. Their solutions are ethical and long-sighted. Youth will form the spiritual environment of the coming decades and centuries.

Defining ‘Sustainable Development’

By Kadri Kalle

As in most things, the first important step is to make clear the terms we are talking about.

The most well-known and widely used definition of sustainability states the need for

“development that meets the needs of future generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

This was said more than 20 years ago (in 1987), by World Commission on Environment and Development in the so-called Brundtland Report.

From there on, there have been probably hundreds of different definitions of sustainable development, each looking it from their own suitable point of view. According to the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, sustainable development means:

“a society with dynamic economy, with full employment and a high level of education, health protection, social and territorial cohesion and environmental protection in a peaceful and secure world, respecting cultural diversity.”

Plainly said, the aim of sustainable development should be to ensure people a good quality of life that would be lasting in time. This is well stated also by the Global Footprint Network, who offers one of the simplest definitions:

“Sustainable development occurs when all human beings can have fulfilling lives, without degrading our planet”.

Therefore, sustainable development is not so much a progress in its conventional meaning (improvement, growth of something) but reaching a certain level and maintaining it. The question is, what is this level of quality of life, this well-being, that we want to reach and what are we able to maintain?

Classically, sustainable development is seen as combination of 3 spheres or pillars or circles: **environment, society and economy**. All of them need the same attention to be developed equally. A few years ago, though, discussions have started, if environment can be seen on the same level as two others, as it provides the core resources, which are the basis for the existence of life on Earth. So there is a certain **paradigm shift** from classical view to sustainability.

According to IUCN's “future of sustainability” initiative, this is **the shift** →

(S. Jeanreneaud, IUCN)

The road towards real sustainability is still long. Even though there have been many talks and loads of paperwork made about sustainable development over the years, the current trends still show direction to more unsustainable development. It's time to make the change in ourselves and ask what the real goals and the real needs are and how we can achieve them in the most efficient and less harming way?

Did you know?

- The core publication of sustainable development (SD) is **Agenda 21**, a comprehensive plan adopted by more than 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992
- To give more weight to SD, in **UN Millennium Summit** in September 2000, the **8 Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) were created
- MDGs are focused on following issues: poverty and hunger, education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, environmental sustainability and global partnership for development.



“There must be a better way to make the things we want, a way that doesn’t spoil the sky, or the rain or the land.”

Sir Paul McCartney

Sustainability in Culture – We Are Part of the Future

By Anita Kalmene

It was in the last year of the high school, when our literature teacher asked us to write a page long essay about the definition of culture and how we understand it. I was the one who handed in four different definitions of culture, in the end saying that it's impossible to define it without knowing about which part of culture we are speaking.

I also remember the beginning of the AEGEE Flagship Project *Sustaining Our Future*, when the team was presenting the main events in front of the general assembly. They were mentioning that one of them will be at the Danube river, paying attention also to the cultures along its bank side and cultural differences. **“Culture and sustainability? How do they fit together?”** I thought at that time.

Oh, how wrong I was! Despite my knowledge in different fields of culture and despite me being active in Culture Working Group, I missed one of the most important parts of culture – the one that makes us sure that the culture is alive throughout the centuries and that it is still recognised.

Now, when I think about culture, sustainability is one of the first words which comes to my mind. My grandma, showing me how to colour eggs with onionskins for Easter; Baltic countries who come together every four years to tell about their past through the songs; Finnish or Russian sauna where people go not for washing, but socialising; never-ending lunches and dinners in the Mediterranean countries where it's all about meeting with your loved ones, not food. And the list could go on and on...

You see, we would not know about any of these things today if at some point they would have disappeared and people would not have appreciated

how important they are. If at some point Western Europeans would have imposed to Southern Europeans to have lunch for only 30 minutes and not two hours, this custom would not have survived and the strong link between the families and friends would have gone weaker. If Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians would not have their Great Song Wars, their children, grandchildren and the next generations would never have learnt so much about the history, culture and society as they do now.

In the 21st century, the century of globalisation, in the century where everything is getting more Americanised, the century where it's cool to be European rather than belonging just to one nation, this **culture is in even greater danger to disappear** than it was before. Festivals that started in small villages to commemorate the special moments and their unique culture are now flooded by tourists, who use it as a reason to have a big party without realising why exactly they are doing it. Traditional food which is now one of the first things to try in every country without asking the locals – why exactly do you eat, **what does it mean to you?**

I think that it's time not just to speak about the sustainable development, it's time to act. Understand the culture around you, understand **why you are who you are**. Ask your parents and grandparents what it means to be a typical representative of your culture. Speak to your peers and see how it has changed throughout the years and how it is now. Write, film, record or do anything to bring this message to the future. Even if we are living in the present, we are responsible in front of the future about the past.

Culture as the 4th pillar of sustainable development

Globalisation is a threat to both biological and cultural diversity. Western value systems are often seen as universal ones, which in reality is not so and that creates cultural imbalance.

It has been debated that culture is the missing part of the sustainable development concept.

In fact, from one point of view, culture should be the central part, as it is what shapes our values, what we mean by 'development' and how we act in the society. We can also learn a lot about SD when analysing some cultures that have lived in harmony with the planet for centuries.

SuFu at a Glance

Map and timeline
of Sustaining our Future
events and activities



- SuFu Event
- AEGEE statutory event, team meeting
- European Day of Environment

In short, what did Sustaining our Future achieve?

Like all life forms, the project also at times evolved differently than we expected. Some goals we had were not reached, and some new results came out, that we hadn't planned.

Our main results (achieved with the help of different AEGEE bodies):

- increasing knowledge, interest and involvement of AEGEE members and European youth in general into issues connected with sustainable development;
- sharing best practices and guidelines of sustainable resources' management and lifestyle all over Europe;
- integrating some sustainability aspects into the functioning of AEGEE and the organisation of our events in general;
- showing the link between sustainable development and the everyday life;
- empowering young people to take an active role in sustainability issues, from giving opinion to stakeholders to organising local actions.

April 15 - 18	Agora Leiden – SuFu results are presented
Dec 28 - Jan 1	New year meeting in Alicante
2010	
Oct 31 - Nov 7	SuFu and the City, Madrid
Oct 22 - 25	Agora Kyiv
Sept 7 - 14	Danube – the most international river in the world, Bratislava
August 15 - 22	Danube – source of inspiration, Danube Delta
June 26 - 28	Team meeting in Brussels
June 5	European Day of Environment
April 15 - 18	Agora Magusa
March 30 - April 5	Sustainable SCANDinavia, Copenhagen
March 19 - 21	Think & In(ter)novate, Brussels
Feb 12 - 15	EBM Torino
Dec 27 - Jan 2	New year meeting in Messologhi
2009	
Nov 15 - 17	Sustaining our Future and Students' Days, Poznan
Oct 5 - 9	Knowledge cafe at IUCN World Conservation Congress, Barcelona
Oct 1 - 4	Agora Aachen
June 9 - 13	Changing Climate – Changing People?, Aachen
June 5	European Day of Environment
May 15 - 17	Youth Solar Days, Brussels
April 30 - May 4	Agora Ljubljana
Feb 29 - Mar 2	EBM Delft
Dec 27 - Jan 2	New year meeting in Soomaa
2008	
Nov 1 - 4	Agora Eskisehir
Sept 19 - 23	Project development meeting Brussels
April 26 - 29	Agora Valletta – SuFu is voted as flagship project
2007	

Awareness – How Do We See Sustainability?

By Kadri Kalle

In order to integrate sustainability aspects into actions, it is also crucial to understand how it is perceived, how aware people are of it. It is also important to understand that “**awareness**” does not only mean getting more info or gaining **knowledge**. It is a complex system of human character, composed also of **values** and **attitudes**, which all together finally result in **acting**. While attitudes can be more easily influenced by, for example, media, then values take time to change, through lifestyle and long-term education.

As part of the *Sustaining our Future* project and a Master thesis, there was survey made among AEGEE members, how they see sustainable development, as a concept, as activities in society and as part of their everyday life. The final amount of respondents was 140 members of AEGEE, who replied to 27 questions, from the definition of sustainable development to consumer decisions. The survey was conducted on-line in Sept-Dec 2008.

On a general level, AEGEE members know what sustainable development stands for – taking into account future generations and making long term plans. The differences between people are in values – which parts of sustainability are considered more important. There are both those, who believe economy to be the base of everything and those who value the balance of nature.

The attitudes and behaviour towards sustainability are described with two charts:

what respondents think SHOULD BE DONE

Best ways to move towards more sustainable life	%
Education, raising awareness	46,4
Governmental actions	28,6
Better resource use	20,7
Changing your own lifestyle	20
Activities by companies	7,9
Creating equal opportunities	5,7

What sometimes seems to be the weaker part in understanding sustainability are the inter-connections and background of different aspects. Many of the respondents don't think about the conditions, under which the products they consume were made, yet the “the story behind stuff” plays a big role in sustainable development.

As for getting the necessary information, NGOs are seen as most reliable sources.

A challenge and opportunity for governments and formal education system to cooperate more with NGOs

what respondents ARE DOING themselves

Personal actions for sustainable life	%
Recycling	32,1
Transport (walking, less flying, no car)	25,7
Saving energy	26,4
Volunteer work	24,3
Smarter consumption	20,7
Self-development	18,6
Saving water	8,6
Less packages	7,9
Ecological or local food, fair trade	5,7
Supporting thematic NGOs, foundations	4,3
One person cannot change anything	2,9

in terms of engaging people into sustainable development issues can be seen here.

There is one clear signal from the results of the survey: AEGEE members believe that **people can be educated to change and create a more sustainable future**. And with a little encouragement, we are also willing to change ourselves.

Youth NGO's Footprint in Environmental Developments

By Olga Daskali

There is a significant majority that still questions the value of active citizenship and the impact it has on current developments. People question themselves, doubting and debating that big changes cannot be made by a person or by a part of society. Undoubtedly, big changes need the participation of vast majorities. Nevertheless 1+1=2 and not 0!

Sustaining Our Future, AEGEE's Flagship Project for 2008-2009, placed its bet on active citizenship. One of the objectives was to raise awareness and activate European Youth on environmental issues. Internally, AEGEE wonders: Did SuFu have an impact? Externally, AEGEE wonders: What is the added value of youth's initiatives?

SuFu activated a team of 15 young Europeans to cooperate, exchange ideas and develop a project. They decided what actions should be included and how these may become true. These 15 Europeans in an association of more than 10 000 members had the possibility to involve and activate approximately 1000 people in organising or participating in an activity.

The best practice for significant results is: Spread the rumour! Take a moment and think how many times you have discussed with your family and friends the weird weather conditions and the lack of seasons. Think how many times you felt relaxed at the sea, or enjoyed a walk in a park. Nowadays we have all this information and valuable technology; it is in our hands to use it for our sake and our environments' sake. Changing the habits in a small community can make more communities to follow. **This is the bet on Youth; to activate as much as possible, to reveal the advantages of an active citizen in comparison to a passive follower. Environment's enemies are greediness and only pursuing profit. Economic science is capable of being environmentally friendly only if political will gives the green light!**



Aggelos Tolkas, member of the Greek Parliament, former President of AEGEE-Thessaloniki admits that “*civil society succeeded in highlighting issues that the conventional political power had not taken into consideration. Nowadays, civil society's proposals are under the microscope, assuring the possibility of participation in the political dialogue. Civil society's presence may become dominant having **transparency and representativeness** as characteristics. The issue of Environment is a bright example of civil society's presence not only in Greece but in whole Europe.*”

He also adds that “*Youth NGOs commit themselves to a crucial role of representation of young people's minds and they fill the gap of missing policies. I can give a vicarious example. Today, in the Parliament I come across several issues that we were discussing roughly some years ago in AEGEE. **Not only NGO's influence exists, but the discussion proceeds in Youth (NGOs).***”

When it comes to the added value of Youth Initiatives and more concretely of Youth NGO's, the answer comes from real practice. It is the Youth that point out the need for change; it is the Youth that evolves the society; it is the Youth that sustains the future.



“New era of sustainability is being organised from the bottom up.”

Paul Hawken
environmental expert



Being part of a youth organisation is a daily challenge. There are plenty of things to learn by organising an event, participating in another, but also and most importantly there are invaluable things to learn by evaluating the efforts and results of it. European Day of Environment (EDE) was an European wide action day through what many AEGEE locals activated themselves and made SuFu visible all over Europe.

EDE was one of the first ideas and the kick-off event of SuFu project. The idea was to activate as many AEGEE locals as possible to organise an action concerning the environment. Chosen day was **June 5th, World Environment Day**. Conferences, debates, outdoor activities, research on environmental issues, photo exhibitions and discussions were some of the activities that AEGEE locals chose to do in order to fulfil the aims of EDE:

- **Draw attention** to the importance of environment in our everyday life.
- **Inform European youth** about alternative and sustainable living solutions.
- **Encourage youth to join and contribute** to the dialogues and decisions on sustainable future of European societies.

Taking a break from everyday stress and celebrate something that you take for granted (and this is our natural environment), proved to be a revitalising activity which combined education with entertainment and appreciation of what is all around us! An excursion to the mountains, a day in the park, a discussion about how non-thoughtful we all are in our daily habits, **rang the bell and draw the red line for some us**. We do hope that this bell will ring for more people in the future.

That is why European Day of Environment does not stop and **will continue for years to come**. For 2010, coordinator of the action is the **Environmental Working Group of AEGEE**! We wish success and of course numerous EDEs all over Europe!

"Being surrounded by trees and extraordinary nature at Panaitoliko mountain, these 2 days filled our minds with inspiration and our lungs with pure oxygen. We checked our knowledge about issues like climate change, global warming and sustainability and we exchanged ideas about how we can be more thoughtful for our environment. I heard some nice ideas that I've never thought of before and I am planning to do more research on the issues. I would definitely do it again!"

Participant of EDE in Athens

*"We tried to present European Day of Environment to as many passer-by as possible so we positioned our stand in a very crowded park. Attracting people was sometimes a challenge because they thought we wanted to sell them something. Other times they approached our stand by themselves. But explaining them about EDE was a very pleasant job because people enjoyed getting something for free (fruit) and being educated at the same time. Our stand was a hit for young families. As soon as children saw the balloons we got their total attention; we educated parents while giving balloons to children. I won't forget an elderly woman which was very pleased that "the young generation" actually cares about our dear Earth. **We should do this more often!"***

Organiser of EDE in Ljubljana



EDE organisers

AEGEE-Alicante
AEGEE-Athina
AEGEE-Berlin
AEGEE-Hamburg
AEGEE-Köln
AEGEE-Kragujevac
AEGEE-Ljubljana
AEGEE-Nijmegen
AEGEE-Nis
AEGEE-Ogre
AEGEE-Peiraias
AEGEE-Rodos
AEGEE-Samara
AEGEE-Sankt-Peterburg
AEGEE-Tallinn
AEGEE-Tartu
AEGEE-Tirana
AEGEE-Tekirdag
AEGEE-Wien

Youth Solar Days

When: May 15-17, 2008

Where: Brussels, Belgium

Who: 35 young people from 10 countries

Local organiser: AEGEE-Europe

Topics: renewable energy, focusing on solar energy

Main activities:

- Visiting European Renewable Energy Centre
- Presentations about solar energy and energy policy
- Workshop about future energy solutions, creating both realistic and idealistic scenario
- Visiting European Solar Days fair



Youth Solar Days were the pre-launch of *Sustaining our Future* project.

The event took place as part of the European Solar Days, aiming to promote the sun as an energy source. European Solar Days brought together major players from the solar thermal and solar electricity sector throughout Europe.



During the event, participants:

- got better idea of the development and opportunities of the photovoltaic;
- gained information about energy policy in EU;
- got to know different companies and organisations working in the solar energy field,
- could see different appliances working on solar power (coffee machines, mobile chargers, etc).

The event was organised in cooperation with European Photovoltaic Industry Association (EPIA) and European Solar Thermal Industry Federation.

The European Renewable Energy Centre

- The European Renewable Energy Centre is the central point for renewable energy issues in Europe's capital Brussels. It is home for the **European Renewable Energy Council (EREC)**, and many other renewable energy associations.
- The centre is the perfect showcase for the integration of innovative renewable energy technologies in an old building, which was refurbished by taking into account renewable energy and energy efficiency considerations. A 120-year-old building was refurbished so as to minimise the energy consumption and to explore different methods for integrating renewable energy technologies, making it a **100% renewable energy building**.

Did you know?

- A TV set on standby can still use 1/4 of the energy it uses when it's on.
 - ▶ Turn off TVs and stereos. You'll save the energy equivalent to a 100-watt light bulb that is always on.
- Only 5% of the power drawn by a cell phone charger is used to charge the phone. The other 95% is wasted when it is left plugged into the wall.
 - ▶ Unplug chargers (for cell phones, iPods, etc) when not in use.

"It was a very interesting meeting, and I think that in future we will participate in similar events; maybe also preparing presentations about renewable energy sources and photovoltaic."

Participant

"I found out that photovoltaic is already attractive from an economic point of view in Southern Europe and will be attractive also in Germany in some years, even without subsidies."

Peter, AEGEE-München

Energy in Europe 2050, idealistic scenario

Ideas from the group work

Sources

- diversification
- decentralisation
- solar energy
- wind energy } renewable

Consumption

- more awareness of people
- decrease energy needs
- self-sustainability of consumption

Transport

- less need for transport of energy
- more sustainable city transport
- no more polluting cars
- teleportation

Regulation

- better regulations
- weather control

Changing Climate – Changing People?

The process of climate change and its consequences are not deniable anymore. Even in areas of moderate climate, abnormal rainfall, increasing water levels and more frequent as well as more intense thunderstorms will affect the environment, the economy and the peoples' lives. In order to prevent society from the worst consequences it is important to establish sustainable solutions in politics, economy, technology and public transportation. The event intended to look closely at the scientific background and the consequences of as well as the solutions for global environmental change.

During the event, the participants:

- got a general overview of the complex phenomenon called climate change,
- learned how different aspects of climate change are influencing each other,
- worked on case studies linking the theoretical info with real situations.

It is always good to see cooperation between different organisations. In this case AEGEE joined forces with **EGEA** – European Geography Association for students and young geographers, which has a quite similar structure to AEGEE. The idea of the event was born already before SuFu started and was later on included into the project activities.



During the event, AEGEE, represented by *Sustaining our Future*, also signed the Countdown 2010 declaration.

Countdown 2010 is an initiative by IUCN, with the aim to stop the loss of biodiversity by 2010. The initiative has partners from governments, business, academia, NGOs, etc from all over the world. AEGEE was the **first youth organisation to sign the declaration**. After that three other youth organisations have signed it, including our umbrella organisation European Youth Forum.

With signing the declaration, AEGEE promised to contribute to the cause by raising awareness on the issue and promoting lifestyles that help to conserve the biodiversity.

When: June 9-13, 2008

Where: Aachen, Rohren, Bonn, Germany

Who: 30 young people from 5 countries

Local organiser: AEGEE-Aachen and EGEA-Bonn

Topics: climate change, its consequences for society and economy

Main activities:

- Workshops on climate change background
- Workshops on economical, social, political and technological aspects of climate change
- Visiting the United Nations University
- Visiting the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (UNU-IHDP)
- AEGEE signing the Countdown 2010 declaration

Did you know?

Loss of biodiversity and climate change are very closely linked.

Changes in the climate also change the conditions of habitats, for example often forcing specific species to migrate, which sometimes results in "foreign" species ruining the relation balance between "local" species. In some cases, that could even drive the local species to the verge of extinction.

As noted by the **Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)** released in March 2005, human activities have taken the planet to the edge of a massive wave of species extinctions, further threatening our own well-being. For instance, current rates of loss are estimated at **100 to 1000 times** natural background levels.

Sustaining our Future Students' Day

A part of flagship projects is also to inspire AEGEE antennae to take up local actions themselves. For SuFu one of these was AEGEE-Poznań, who decided to include some environmental actions into their Students' Day.

The event:

- gave knowledge on recycling and it's importance
- showed a good example to people on how to recycle,
- gave information on different aspects of sustainable living and background of products,
- gave direction to people to act in a more ecological way in their everyday life,
- encouraged to start with small actions on local level.



Flashmob with earth-balloons at Freedom Square in Poznań

"This students' tradition – The Students' Day – is not known in Poland so we decided to change it and organise this day in Poznan. Actually everywhere during this day students organise happenings and protests against the human rights violation, but we decided to celebrate this day in another way – organising an environment-friendly day with lectures, workshops, and 'green' events."

Hania, organiser

Did you know?

The energy saved from recycling one glass bottle will light a 100-watt light bulb for four hours.

When: November 15-17, 2008

Where: Poznań, Poland

Who: 300 people from all over Poznań (mainly students)

Local organiser: AEGEE-Poznań

Topic: sustainable resource management, from global view to local impacts

Main activities:

- University competition in collecting glass
- Workshops and discussions on climate change, globalisation, recycling, renewable energy and ecological products
- Movie and discussion about animal welfare

Glass collection competition

- **6** points next to dormitories and universities where students could bring glass.
- It was held on Saturday and Sunday from 10 to 17 o'clock.
- At the end all the glass brought was counted and the best university and the best team of 5 students got prizes during the award ceremony.
- Together there were over **5500** bottles and jars brought and the winning team collected over **700** bottles and jars.

This action proved that students can be environmentally active when appropriately convinced to take part in contributing to a better environment. The promotion of recycling was successful and a great amount of participants provided us with hope that in the future they will keep on recycling.



"At first we were afraid of people's attitude towards our project. We were not sure if this topic would be interesting enough to them. It was the first project like that and at such a scale in our region and one of the first in Poland. The outcome surpassed our expectations. Generally, we are very pleased with the results."

Wojtek, organiser

Sustainable Transport and Europe



Europe has to embrace the challenge of sustainable transport if it is to continue to be able to move goods and people at the same high standards it has grown accustomed to. The primary goal of the European Transport Policy is to establish a sustainable transport system that meets society's economic, social and environmental needs. The challenge of tomorrow will be to satisfy a **rising demand for mobility** in a context of **growing sustainability concerns**. The most immediate priorities appear to be better integration of the different transport modes as a way to improve the overall efficiency of the system and the acceleration of the development and deployment of innovative and greener technologies.

It is clear that much work still needs to be done. In no other sector has the growth rate of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions been as high in the European Union compared to 1990 levels as in transport. Transport did not significantly reduce its GHG intensity by switching to cleaner energy sources and still depends on fossil fuels in 97%. Thus there is a growing urgency for the transport sector to mitigate its negative impact on the environment.

In addition, oil and other fossil fuels are expected to become more expensive in the coming decades. The need to move to a **low-carbon economy** and the growing concerns about **energy security** will bring about a greater supply of renewable energy, made much cheaper by technological progress and mass production.

Lowering consumption of non-renewable resources will be essential in all transport systems. The undesired environmental consequences of transport activity will require further action in particular on noise, air pollutant emissions and greenhouse gas emissions.

The threat of global warming is far from the only challenge facing us in the coming decades. By 2060, the number of people aged 65 or more is expected to represent 30% of the population as opposed to 17%

today. Through its effect on public finances, **ageing** will put a strain on the supply and maintenance of transport infrastructure. Migration too could lead to more movement of people and goods. And last but not least, **urbanisation** has been a clear trend in the past decades and is expected to continue.

Tackling these issues will require careful planning. The European Commission is aware of this, which is why it has been reflecting on the main challenges in the EU transport sector, and on how to best respond to them. While designing the **European Transport Policy** of the future, we have to keep in mind that interventions on the transport sector must be based on a **long-term vision for the sustainable mobility** of people and goods, not least because policies of structural character take long to implement and must be planned well in advance. That is why transport policies for the coming years must be based on a reflection on the future of the transport system that embraces also the following decades.

The Commission intends to continue working to respond to the challenges the transport sector will have to face in the future. But the success of our efforts will to a large extent depend on the perception of sustainability in transport. It is fundamental that, next to developing targets and setting objectives, we also work on **education**, information and awareness raising campaigns, which will ultimately play an important role in influencing **future consumer behaviour** and facilitating sustainable mobility choices.

In this respect, I very much **count on younger generations**. You will enjoy an unprecedented ease in travelling throughout Europe, and your propensity for mobility will most likely be much higher than that of previous generations. I therefore hope that you will be conscious of the importance of sustainable transport: by making the right choices, you will play a decisive role in shaping the transport system of the future.

Siim Kallas

Vice-President of the European Commission, responsible for transport

Youth Think Tank: Create & In(ter)novate!

The youth Think Tank was the **first event** within AEGEE of **this type**, aiming to bring together actual issues existing in companies and institutions and youth's creativity and innovativeness in order to come up with new ideas to solve these situations.

The core of the think tank was the task for groups of 5 people, to find the solution to proposed questions. This had to be written down in a paper of max 2 A4's. At the end of the day, these were judged by a jury consisting of representatives of industry and young people working for the EU. The best idea was awarded a **prize of 1000 Euro**.

The participants:

- were challenged with real problems in a limited timeframe,
- had the possibility to get feedback on the solutions proposed,
- got to know a bit better the way industries and policies work in EU and in Brussels,
- got better insight into energy, transport and consumption issues on global level.

After the event, here was a **special results' booklet** of the think tank published containing all the written answer papers.

"Capitalism may collapse because it does not allow the economy to tell the ecologic truth."

Lester R. Brown
founder of the Worldwatch Institute

The questions assigned to groups (one per group):

1. How to push the car industry to invest money for the development of a new era of cars fuelled with renewables?
2. How to convince the public administration, both at governmental and local levels, to invest public money in green transport and renewable energy, e.g. installing solar panels on public buildings and using only renewable energy for buses and metro?
3. How can emerging and 3rd world countries increase their living standards without compromising the earth's resources?
4. How can we save energy in daily life without decreasing living standard, consumption and harming economy?

The questions were put forward by TUSIAD (the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association) and SolarPV Globe (global communication consultancy to the photovoltaic sector).

When: March 19-21, 2009
Where: Brussels, Belgium
Who: 50 young people from 12 countries
Local organiser: AEGEE-Europe
Topics: renewable energy, sustainable transport and consumption

Main activities:

- Climate lobbying tour by Corporate Europe Observatory
- Visiting the European Renewable Energy Centre
- Group work: six hours to create a solution paper for the questions posed by the industry partners
- Award ceremony and networking cocktail
- Sightseeing in Brussels



"Working on the given topic supported also my decision to shift my field of interest/devotion towards a profession that seems more sustainable and more promising to grant me the possibility to stand up for my ideals and carry my ideas into effect."

Attila, AEGEE-Karlsruhe

Universities as Drivers for Sustainable Societies

By Kadri Kalle



Scandinavia is known for its advanced state when it comes to sustainability – a high level of environmental awareness, recycling opportunities, plenty of organic food and other ecological products, etc. The governments consider a sustainable lifestyle important and have integrated it into their plans.

One of the areas where much progress is being made is higher education. One can find quite some universities in Scandinavia striving towards greener campuses, two of the biggest probably being the University of Copenhagen in Denmark and the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. And sustainable universities seem to be growing trend all over the world, from Australia to Japan.

When it comes to showing the way and a good example in sustainable development, universities have the perfect position. They are centres of education, research, and innovation of the whole society. They can take a **leadership role in developing knowledge and technologies** for a more sustainable future and direct it to practice. Since most universities are campus universities (situated on one site, with student accommodation, teaching and research facilities, and leisure activities all together), they have a great opportunity to test different sustainability solutions.

“In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create, but by what we refuse to destroy.”

John Sawhill

The possibilities for sustainable universities are wide. Some examples:

- Organic food in cafeterias
- Efficient energy use and use of renewable energy
- Reducing water use
- Landscape design supporting non-formal learning outside the classroom
- Ecological building design
- Environmentally friendly transport concepts
- Respecting gender balance and cultural diversity
- Courses of sustainable development as part of the curriculum

The International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU) has developed a toolkit that can be used by every university in the transition to a sustainable one. The toolkit can be found: <http://www.iaruni.org/sustainability/toolkit>



Some examples:

The University of Copenhagen, Denmark

- aims to become one of the greenest campuses in Europe by 2012
- target: to reduce energy consumption by 20% in comparison with the year 2006
- new carbon-neutral building

The University of Gothenburg, Sweden

- ISO 14 001 and EMAS environmental standard
- environmental aspects are taken into account also in procurement
- aims to use the least dangerous chemicals possible

Did you know?

- The Green Campus idea in Copenhagen was initiated by an e-mail from a student to the university rector.
- In the UK every year a student group called People & Planet publishes the Green League – a list of most sustainable universities in the country – which is taken rather seriously by university boards.

Sustainable SCANDinavia

The aim of the project SCANDinavia was to explore the green way of life of the Nordic people. Since Denmark is a perfect example of a sustainable lifestyle, we decided to explore the way of living of the people of Copenhagen and gather as many good practices as possible. In order to motivate our participants to take their own initiatives in their home countries our aim was to make them see that a green lifestyle is just as much a community's effort as well as an individual's.

“Every product we consume has a similar hidden story, the unwritten inventory of its materials, resources, and impacts. It also has attendant waste generated by its use and disposition.”

Paul Hawken
environmental expert

The main ideas that the participants went with:

- It is possible for a society to be self-sufficient. A good example of such society is Christiania.
- Waste management is a process that demands a whole lot of work. A perfect solution to the problem is to produce less waste.
- The food industry follows a very complex scheme. In order to help the farmers negotiate a fair price for their efforts one should buy local and fair trade products.
- Citizens can influence local governments to make decisions which will contribute to a better living environment.
- Environmental problems don't stop at borders. The European mentality is important for tackling the problem on a larger scale.

“I learnt about different ways of being more sustainable in everyday life: using mostly local ingredients when cooking, going on foot instead by car or bus,, recycling.”

Athina, AEGEE-Thessaloniki

“I learnt about the current situation of sustainability in different countries: I think I now know more about the advantages and disadvantages of my country and the country I am living in now.”

Ling, AEGEE-Linköping

When: March 30 – April 05, 2009

Where: Copenhagen, Denmark

Who: 28 young people from 10 countries

Local organiser: AEGEE-Kobenhavn

Topics: best practices from Copenhagen, one of the greenest capitals of Europe, sustainable lifestyle.

Main activities:

- Presentations of the Green Campus of the University of Copenhagen
- Visiting the European Environmental Agency
- Visiting Vestforbrænding, Denmark's largest waste management company
- Organic food and energy workshops
- “We feed the world” movie discussion
- Self-made organic dinner and ecological European Night
- Role play game and discussion about fair trade
- Group work on the case about a future event on the same topic
- Excursion to Christiania, an alternative community in Copenhagen



"Many of the wars in this [20th] century were about oil, but those of the next century will be over water."

Ismail Seragelgin
World Bank



Danube – Let it Flow! was the biggest sub-project of *Sustaining our Future*, divided into 2 events.

The concept came from the idea that the Danube River is **not just water**. Passing through a lot of countries in Europe, the Danube has a significant impact on people's life. The river serves many purposes, such as transportation, food, recreation, agriculture, and so forth. Yet, this river has been important in many other aspects, with its big influence on the environment, cultures, economies etc., both determining common micro-cultures along its bank side and cultural differences.

The sub-project aimed to underline the importance of the Danube River and its ecosystems among youth, to promote and encourage active citizenship and environmentally friendly attitudes in order to bring the topic of sustainable development closer to young people.

Danube – Let it flow! was financially supported by the *Youth in Action* programme of the European Commission.

On this map you can see all AEGEE antennae that are located on the Danube River.

The Danube is the second longest river in Europe. It is also the most international river on the planet, as it flows through 10 countries: Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldova, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Ukraine.

The Danube Delta is home to over 60% of the world's population of pygmy cormorants (*phalacrocorax pygmeus*), 50% of red-breasted geese (*branta ruficollis*) and the largest number of white pelicans (*pelecanus onocrotalus*) and Dalmatian pelicans (*pelecanus crispus*) in Europe.

Ecotourism – Responsible Travel on Local Conditions

By Aivar Ruukel, chairman of Estonian Ecotourism Society

Ecotourism or ecotravel has many different meanings for different people. I understand it as a way of thinking and acting rather than a travel segment or product, a philosophy rather than a market niche. From the ecotraveller's perspective it does not matter so much **where** you travel, **what** activities you participate in or what you experience. What matters is **why** and **how** you travel and what is the impact of your trip.

Every kind of trip has an impact. Ecotravel is the kind of travel that aims to minimise the negative impact and maximise the positive impact. It is a complex issue involving socio-cultural, socio-economic and environmental aspects. The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as “**Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.**” Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel. It is a holistic concept and needs a holistic approach. But, how can you as a traveller become part of this concept?

Probably the most important single principle is that, wherever you travel, you should **leave your stereotypes and prejudices at home!** Ecotourism in practice can only be successful when the local conditions form the playground and people living in the area set the rules of the game. It is **their home** that is visited. Local conditions are different everywhere and this should be respected by tourists. Only childish, ignorant or totalitarian minds can believe and hope for local conditions to be the same everywhere. Ecotourism is a global philosophy and a theory but the practical outcome is always location-specific, and the implementation of common principles is based on the local logic.

The Internet opens great direct communication channels for the smallest ecotour operators in the remotest corners of the Earth. The Web has changed and continues to change travellers' consumption patterns. The consumer's adoption of social networks is increasing with a rapid pace, and the future consumers will have more and more power to design travel offers – experiences based on their dreams.



10 tips on how to be an ecotourist

- Prepare well; learn about the place where you are going to travel!
- Read what other travellers are saying in blogs and travel websites, be smart to foresee greenwashing!
- Choose the most environmentally friendly means of transport!
- Book locally owned and environmentally friendly accommodation!
- Avoid big international tour companies and holiday resorts!
- When you arrive at the destination behave as if you were visiting friends. Respect the local way of living, learn some words of the local language
- Ask for local services, fresh food, avoid buying imported stuff!
- Prefer authentic experiences and natural attractions; avoid artificial theme parks created for tourists!
- Learn how to support conservation and do it!
- After the trip share your findings, thoughts, experiences online, and help to expand collective knowledge. We are what we share!

Danube – Source of Inspiration

The Danube River Basin is home to 81 million people with a wide range of cultures, languages and historical backgrounds. The Danube River has an influence on the culture of each place crossed by the river. On the other side, its ecosystem is also home to the vast number of species, which are threatened by different human activities such as industry and tourism.

During the event, the participants:

- got to know the beautiful nature of the Danube Delta and its surroundings,
- experienced the traditional Romanian lifestyle in the fishermen villages,
- realised in what ways mass tourism is threatening the Danube Delta ecosystem,
- gained knowledge of sustainable development and small everyday actions that can be taken into account by them and passed on to the others in their organisation,
- cleaned up a big part of a remote beach by collecting the garbage left there by tourists.

“In Nature we never see anything isolated, but everything in connection with something else which is before it, beside it, under it, and over it.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



When: August 15-22, 2009

Where: Tulcea County, the Danube Delta, Romania

Who: 26 young people from 9 countries

Local organiser: AEGEE-Cluj-Napoca

Topics: cultural influence of the Danube River, ecotourism, nature protection areas, sustainability connected to water

Main activities:

- Study trip to Letea Forest
- Study trip to the lakes of Uzlina-Isacova-Isacel
- Garbage clean up day at Perisor beach
- Workshops about sustainability and nature conservation
- Presentations about the Danube Delta and the river's influence on artists
- Boat trip on the Danube

“During the event I got inspired by zero waste concepts, and I used a big part of that knowledge in a workshop in the last AEGEE European Boards Meeting. Many active AEGEE members attended the meeting and showed their willingness to organise greener projects in the future, so a follow-up will come soon!”

Ramon, new flagship project Beyond Europe

Did you know?

- The Danube Delta is the second largest and best preserved of Europe's deltas;
- The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve is one of UNESCO World Heritage Sites and has the third largest biodiversity in the world (over 5,500 flora and fauna species), exceeded only by the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and the Galapagos Archipelago in Ecuador;
- Austrian composer Johann Strauss composed a famous waltz *An der schönen, blauen Donau* (*On the Beautiful Blue Danube*), while he was travelling down the river;
- Famous French writer Jules Verne wrote the book “Le Pilote du Danube” (“The Danube Pilot”), published in 1908, which depicts the adventures of Serge Ladko, a fisherman on the Danube.

Danube from a Historic Perspective – A Flow of Images

By Tamás Kende

historian-museologist at Ferenczy Museum in Szentendre, Hungary



There is a nice similarity between time and rivers – they are both in a constant flow and change. Over the time the Danube has formed certain relations with its surroundings. Let's take one peculiar small city along the Danube and take a short look at the relation between them: the way the city managers have tried to (mis)use the river.

The small town of **Szentendre** is – from the perspective of Budapest – the gate to the Danube Knee. Founded on the ruins of a Roman fortress and a village that was part of the Roman Limes along the Danube, Szentendre became a typical Danubian merchant town and played an important role in the pre-industrial inner and foreign commerce. The late 19th century saw the rise of the town's legal status as well as the gradual loss of its economic and commercial importance. Almost all the city's managers have tried to cope with this contradiction, and the **Danube has always played the key role in the actual city managing projects**. How has the Danube been imagined as a driving force to promote this small city?

The first task was the re-definition of the relation between the river and the city. In other words: **What did the Danube represent for the decision makers?** The river has been a con-

stant threat due to regular floods. Already at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries local citizens formed an informal pressure group to advocate the construction of a strong dam. The dam was completed in the 1960s eventually cutting the town from the river that used to be its main vital source. Before the dam's construction **the river bank** – however unsettled – was where **the local market and the most important public place was** – a place, where people met, and where goods and ideas could be exchanged.

The first decade of the 20th century witnessed the tourists' discover of the town and the town's managers **discovered tourism** as an important source of the income. The interest in the town was based on its position along the – at that time still clean– Danube and the town's closeness to Budapest. Every day steam boats took tourists from the capital to the town and thus the capital started a slow motion into the city as well. Restaurants, guesthouses, etc. were being opened. Richer visitors started to buy estates and built their **weekend houses and villas** along the Danube or on the hills surrounding the town. Thus, elite and mass tourism appeared as different challenges in the early 20th century.

After the WWI, young and poor painters also discovered Szentendre, forming their **artists' colonies** in the city. The city management soon discovered that the presence of these painters **can serve the city's PR** as well. It is not a surprising fact that one of the **painters' most important themes was (and still is) the Danube**, the town's Danubian bank. Plans and projects were made for the promotion of the town. It is the irony of the history that these

plans and projects were really implemented in the decades of the Goulash-Communism. From the early 60s on the representatives of the regime's elite (or of the New Class) were gradually buying smaller or bigger estates and houses in the town. Owning at least a small weekend house in the Danube Knee and especially in Szentendre became a kind of **status symbol**. City managers and early environmentalists from the 1970s tried to put an end to the town's unwelcome transformation into a **suburb of Budapest**. But the commercial pressure became stronger, even in the last two decades of the socialist regime. The spontaneous unregulated processes of the Budapest suburbanisation were not followed by a proper development of the infrastructure what caused serious environmental problems. It was the **Danube that attracted** the new type of migration to Szentendre and it was and still is the Danube **that suffers** most from its consequences.

Most recently a new big project has been under preparation to **redefine the town's relation to the river**. Local citizens are trying to save and revitalise the river and its bank in Szentendre. At the same time there is a strong pressure from the representatives of the capital. During the last 50 years 3 official "canonised" city developing projects have been issued. All of them were aimed at avoiding the unregulated suburbanisation process in advance to **save a historical small town** along the river. Despite these directives the city is becoming an overpopulated suburb of Budapest. The capital (as metropolis and as money) vs. romanticism and environment. Quite an old story. But exceptions are also known in the history.

Danube – the Most International River in the World

The Danube has many influences on people: it is a route of transport, an obstacle or advantage in city planning, a natural resource. The river flows through many countries, making them so even more interdependent. When taking a decision concerning the river, one country does not only influence itself, but all the other countries along the river.

During the event, the participants:

- explored different sides and influences of the Danube: from dancing lessons (reference to waltz melodies named after the Danube) to cycling tour,
- experienced the true international character of the Danube: besides a boat trip to Vienna, also taking a small bike trip to the Slovakian-Hungarian border, thus visiting 3 countries in 1 week,
- became more aware of the influence of the river on communities and countries around it, the complexity of problems affecting them,
- got more familiar with small sustainable everyday actions, which have been now taken more into account by them,

"The uniqueness of the SuFu event lies in the wonderful combination of learning and fun: in just one week's time we managed to become familiar with key aspects of the Danube and its preservation and at the same time we enjoyed ourselves in the company of great people from all over Europe!"

Alexandra, AEGEE-Cluj-Napoca

- developed a better understanding of the global role of water and different water bodies,
- got motivated to organise events related to sustainability by themselves.



"Some things I have learnt during the event have already formed part of my daily routine, and you only realise this once you become conscious of it."

Yvette, AEGEE-Valletta

When: Sept 7-13, 2009

Where: Bratislava, Slovakia

Who: 29 young people from 12 countries

Local organiser: AEGEE-Bratislava

Topics: international character of the Danube River, its influences on societies around it

Main activities:

- Presentations about the Danube and sustainability
- Role play on the Bastroe channel case
- Visiting "Danubius Fluvius – in the flow of time" exhibition
- Bike trip to Čuňovo, an area near Bratislava and Hungarian border
- Visiting Železná studnička, a forest area at the edge of Bratislava
- Visiting Gabčíkovo hydroengineering structure
- Waltz dancing lessons
- Boat trip to Vienna

Did You know?

- There are 4 European capitals on the Danube: Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and Belgrade.
- The Danube is an important source of water supply for cities and agriculture in many of the countries the river crosses. The river is an important link between Central and Eastern Europe and the Black Sea.
- The name Danube in different languages:
 - Дунав/Dunav (Bulgarian)
 - Dunav (Croatian)
 - Donau (German)
 - Duna (Hungarian)
 - Dunăre, Dunărea (Romanian)
 - Dunaja (Romani)
 - Дунав/ Dunav (Serbian)
 - Dunaj (Slovak)
 - Дунай/Dunay (Ukrainian)
 - Danubius, Danuvius, Ister (Latin).

Save the Cities!

By Miguel Gallardo Albajar

Cities are ecosystems where a very important species dwells: the *Homo sapiens*. Nowadays, more than 50% of human population lives in cities. In Europe, the situation is even more extreme, with four out of five Europeans living in towns and cities. Europe is an urban society. It is in urban ecosystems where the majority of Europeans work, buy, eat, learn, sleep, meet other people, or spend their leisure time. Not to forget mentioning that urban areas foster many economic activities and play a key role in the development of a country. As a consequence of its size and population density, these aggregations of people **consume resources** coming from a vast area around them, and **produce tons of waste** that has to be disposed of safely: they have a big ecological footprint.

Cities are nowadays often pictured as unfriendly, noisy and dirty environments, and therefore always opposed to a clean environment. In the last decades, cities have become aggressive, with more and more concrete and metal, and millions of people living in cities often have a hard time finding areas suitable for meeting each other, establishing connections and interaction. As a result, this leads to a fast decrease in quality of life.

Esta es una plaza – This is a square

When creativity meets society needs, where active citizens decide to take the initiative, magic happens. Where there was nothing but **an empty lot** in a crowded neighbourhood in Madrid, and after some Alakazam! now vegetables are growing, children have a place to play, artists are encouraged to create and there is **a meeting point for people** that are rediscovering the pleasure of sleeping siesta under a tree, who grow their own herbs and spices, bake a cake to share with other neighbours or participate in **a common dream**.

To read the whole story and learn more, you can visit:
<http://estaesunaplaza.blogspot.com/>



But this scenario can be changed. Given the fact that they are compact and have a built-in communication network that is often well developed, management systems can be successfully implemented for waste, transportation, energy and many other processes, **optimising efficiency** to reach sustainable levels. With the help

of current and future technologies, and by taking advantages of the coherent and well-planned urban design, the latest innovations in architecture and engineering, and with the necessary commitment of both politicians and citizens, cities can again become welcoming and people-friendly environments, and reduce their negative impact on the environment.

Citizens cannot just wait for this change to happen. They are to take an active role in this change of paradigm, and fight for their right to live in an environment that respects their needs and is adapted to a human scale. This initiative can be taken by citizens participating in decision processes happening in their neighbourhoods, by their involvement in associations and NGOs, or whatever other means they find to make their cities **a better place for the people and for the environment**, covering all three pillars of sustainability: social, environmental and economic. Young European citizens have the right to shape the kind of cities they want to live in; architects, urban planners, politicians and other stakeholders should take their opinion into consideration, and listen to all sectors of the society to create a sustainable city.



SuFu and the City tried to prove to the participants that a sustainable city is not a utopia anymore. It was based on some theoretical sessions about how things work in modern cities and the new solutions that were being adopted in a city like Madrid, to revise and improve its performance in sustainability. Especially, we wanted to show the possibilities for citizen-actions in order to make the changes needed and we empowered the participants with tools and inspiration to be at the forefront of the movement for more sustainable cities.

Our participants had the opportunity to learn through:

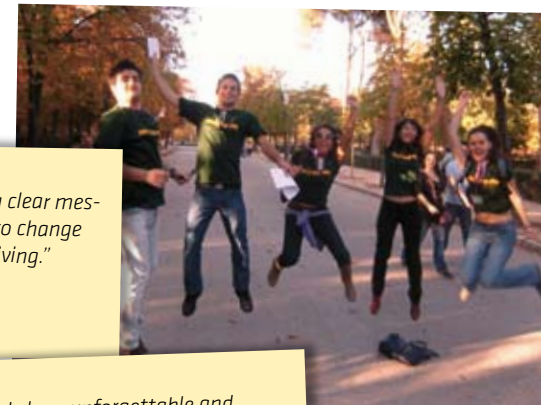
- interaction with specialists that are working in fields like biodiversity, architecture,
- looking at the city of Madrid through the lens of sustainability,
- discovering how a group of citizens can take the initiative and transform an empty lot into a new reality: an organic garden, an open air theatre and exhibition centre, a playground and a sports area and above all, a meeting place for the citizens,
- presentation and comparison of their own cities on aspects like energy efficiency, urban planning, green areas, water and transportation network,
- experiences on how solar energy works and how it can be implemented in an innovative way into today's (and tomorrow's) architecture,
- sharing one week with other young Europeans with different backgrounds and with a common interest in Sustainability in urban environments.

"A SuFu event gives you a clear message that it is high time to change our way of thinking and living."

Dani, AEGEE-Ljubljana

"I told all my friends how unforgettable and great time I had and tried to pass on to them at least part of knowledge I'd received."

Anna, AEGEE-Kyiv



When: Oct 31-Nov 08, 2009

Where: Madrid, Spain

Who: 25 participants from 19 countries

Local organiser: AEGEE-Madrid

Topics: urban planning, sustainable architecture, active citizenship, solar energy, waste management, sustainable cities

Main activities:

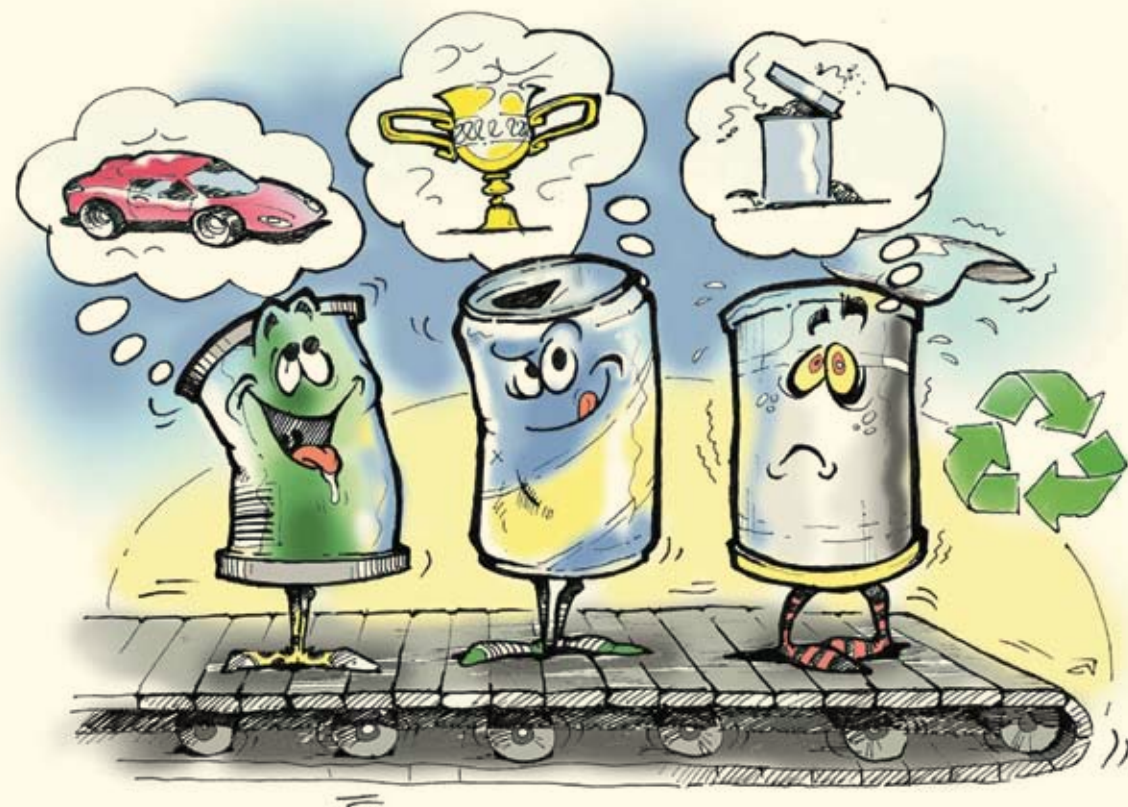
- Architectural city tour and photo rally
- Lectures on new technology solutions and sustainable architecture materials
- Visit to "Esta es una plaza", a citizen initiative and "UrbanAcción" exhibition
- Visit to Holmen Paper, the biggest paper recycling plant in Europe.
- Presentation of Solar Decathlon competition and projects.
- Interactive workshop "Your city, my city: looking for sustainability".
- IUCN speech on urban biodiversity and Singapore's Biodiversity Cities' Index.
- Visit to Valdemingómez Waste Management Plant

Did you know?

- The Retiro Park in Madrid has a surface of 120 ha, more than 19 000 trees of 150 different species, it hosts several migratory and nesting bird species and some masterpieces of architecture and art. It is the green lung situated in the city centre.
- Metro Madrid has an extensive network of 293 stations, providing service to 2,5 million people everyday, and is coordinated with other public transport systems like bus or tram. Nevertheless traffic jams are still a reality in Madrid, which lacks proper cycleways in down-town.
- European Commission has started to give the European Green Capital award. Stockholm and Hamburg have been selected the green capitals of Europe for 2010 and 2011.

“Don’t throw anything away. There is no ‘away’”

from Royal Dutch Shell advert



The Long Path towards Zero Waste Events

By Giovanni Circella

The concept of “Zero Waste” goes further beyond the traditional approaches for the recycling of human waste, and embodies an innovative strategy that may considerably improve waste management processes, and the entire consumption cycles of the 21st century. It is an ambitious “whole system” approach that aims at delivering zero waste to landfills.

According to the Zero Waste philosophy, all materials and natural resources involved in the processes of extraction, production and human consumption are expected to be separately collected and reprocessed for their reintroduction in the productive chain, or (if perfectly compatible with the ecosystem) in the nature.

The strategy is an evolution of the well known 4R – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rethink – it seeks to **reduce the amount of consumption, minimise waste, maximise recycling, and ensure that products are made to be reused, repaired or recycled back into the nature or the marketplace.** In theory, Zero Waste policies can outstandingly contribute to the conservation of natural resources, and to the abatement of pollutants in the environment. However, several barriers to the adoption of zero waste policies may exist, and significant modifications in economic processes and lifestyles are often required to make this solution succeed.

An efficient strategy for Zero Waste requires significant investments and organised efforts in all stages of the production/consumption cycle and in particular in the early stages of planning activities, in the selection of technologies, materials and solutions that are fully designed for a complete regeneration of the used resources.



The concept of zero waste can be successfully applied to the organisation of events with large numbers of participants. Such events are usually associated with major environmental externalities, in terms of energy and resource consumption and waste production. Going “Zero Waste” means a great improvement in the organisation of such events: it would cap the consumption of natural resources at a sustainable level; it would solve the problem of contaminations of the natural ecosystems with wastes, and support a responsible market for the consumption of recycled materials.

The concept of Zero Waste was introduced in AEGEE during 2009, as a way to drastically reduce the environmental impact of meetings and events, and as a policy to promote more sustainable lifestyles among the young members of the association. The idea was presented as part of a presentation in the event “Danube – A Source of Inspiration” in the Danube Delta in Tulcea, Romania (August 2009). The successful experience in the organisation of similar events at the University of California, Davis, instilled the idea of importing the concept in AEGEE, as a way to reduce the environmental effects of meetings and events, and to promote healthier and more sustainable lifestyles.

Zero Waste Events and AEGEE

Zero waste events are a feasible solution for the organisation of green meetings at private companies, universities and associations. Careful planning and dedicated “green” logistics are the key-words for turning a job-meeting, a sport match or a concert into a sustainable and zero-waste event.

The idea could be successfully applied to the organisation of AEGEE events, as Summer Universities, workshops and other meetings!



4R stands for

“Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rethink”...

It is a strategy to improve the production/consumption cycles of goods, and significantly reduce the depletion of natural resources and the production of environmental pollutants.

Greening the Organisation

By Alexandru Ghiurca

The Environmental Working Group, founded in 1990, was one of the first working groups of AEGEE. After 9 years, it faded away, but was re-founded again in spring 2007, by a group of AEGEE environment-enthusiasts – the same people who proposed *Sustaining our Future* as a flagship project.

We, at the **Environmental Working Group (EnWG)**, are a team of AEGEEans, who spend their time protecting the environment and making young people across Europe aware of the impact of their actions. Joining the EnWG is not only about dedicating your studies and efforts to that, it is also about a life-changing experience, as John Steinbeck said:

“It is not the human who makes the trip, but it’s the trip which makes the human”.

You may ask how. And that’s what we want to tell you. We are not the ones that cut off the light when you are sending an important e-mail, not even the ones that cut off the hot water supply in freezing winter. And we are not sending you fines for not throwing your garbage in the right bin. But that’s an idea... ☺

Our aims are:

- raise awareness on environmental issues within AEGEE and beyond,
- facilitate discussion on the topic,
- initiate and support AEGEE environmental activities,
- reduce the ecological impact of AEGEE
- just to show you that taking into account environmental aspects can also be fun and economically beneficial

EnWG has shared big part of the journey of *Sustaining our Future*, being the source and support of the project. Many big projects were initiated by the EnWG, like the European Day of Environment and the green Summer Universities. Conferences, workshops, trainings in collaboration with some antennae (AEGEE local groups) are some more activities that we have done. We see ourselves as promoters for other AEGEE bodies to be greener.



At the EnWG event in **Magdeburg** we raised awareness about the importance of peaceful and prosperous energy-based relations within Europe and the importance of sustainable energy for our future development. Magic Christmas scenery and a group of keen students were the key to success. Concepts like energy security, energy efficiency, geopolitics and energy independence, were all presented and debated through interactive presentations, case studies and SWOT analysis. **All AEGEE antennae can do that**, either by asking for our help or by organising events by themselves, as sustainable as possible.

Green Summer Universities

- Initiative by EnWG to introduce a green theme to the AEGEE oldest project – the Summer Universities (SU).
- Link the cultural experience and fun of a SU to environmental aspects and a sense of responsibility for the impact which everybody causes with their acting.
- Two directions:
 - 1) sessions about environment in the program of the event
 - 2) minimise the ecological impact of the event in logistics etc
- The best SU in 2009 also had a green topic.
- In 2008-2009, there were 14 green SUs organised, and awards given to the best ones
- How to organise a green SU:
www.wg.aegEE.org/enwg/gsu.html

How to Make Your Event Greener?

Some things have to be taken into account when dealing with an environmental conscious event:

- use ecological, recycled paper, and print both sides when possible;
- use as much natural light as possible and if possible organise outdoors activities;
- use public transport, cycle or go on foot;
- choose less packaging for food, and buy mostly local products;
- give participants ecological gifts (fabric bag instead of plastic one, cups to be used during the event);
- Separate the waste produced.

More info: www.wg.aegEE.org/enwg/greentips.html



EBM Krakow = 4 days x 325 participants

How was it made more sustainable?

- garbage separation
- using the least possible amount of plastic
- a special eco-booklet for the participants and fabric bag
- trying to save energy (eg. turning-off chargers)

AEGEE statutory events – a great opportunity!

- General assembly, aka Agora, 2x in year, 800-1000 participants
- European Boards Meeting, aka EBM, 1x in year, ~300 participants

Having such a big amount of people coming together from all over Europe, makes quite a significant impact on the local economy and community, and also on the environment!

All the flying emissions, food consumed, papers printed, waste created... But it’s also a perfect opportunity to show how a sum of small actions can lead up to a big difference!

Small calculation:

3 days x 800 people x 2 coffee breaks a day x 1 plastic cup per break = 4800 plastic cups thrown away (it takes ~50 years for a plastic cup to decompose, depending on the concrete material)

IF every person used the same cup for both breaks in one day, the end result would be already 2400 cups less!

Interview with the main coordinator of AEGEE European Boards Meeting Krakow 2010, **Andrzej Kozdęba**



Why did you decide to have green European Boards Meeting (EBM)?

It was pretty difficult to come up with a theme for our project. Finally we decided to make EBM green – because ‘green’ is an important topic. We knew that sustainability was the main theme of AEGEE flagship project and it was another reason for choosing this option. We were aware that people don’t know enough about ecology and we wanted to show them (not only people from AEGEE) that acting environment-friendly was no difficult task to do!

Why do you consider it important to have a green theme for an event?

In fact, many times living in harmony with the nature is much easier and cheaper than living without green rules. We wanted to show people how they can help themselves – project like EBM is a perfect opportunity to incorporate this idea in.

What was the hardest and easiest thing in making the EBM environmental friendly?

The hardest thing was to get environmental-friendly products from our sponsors. Artificial things like plastic are much cheaper but we wanted to use as many eco-friendly things as possible.

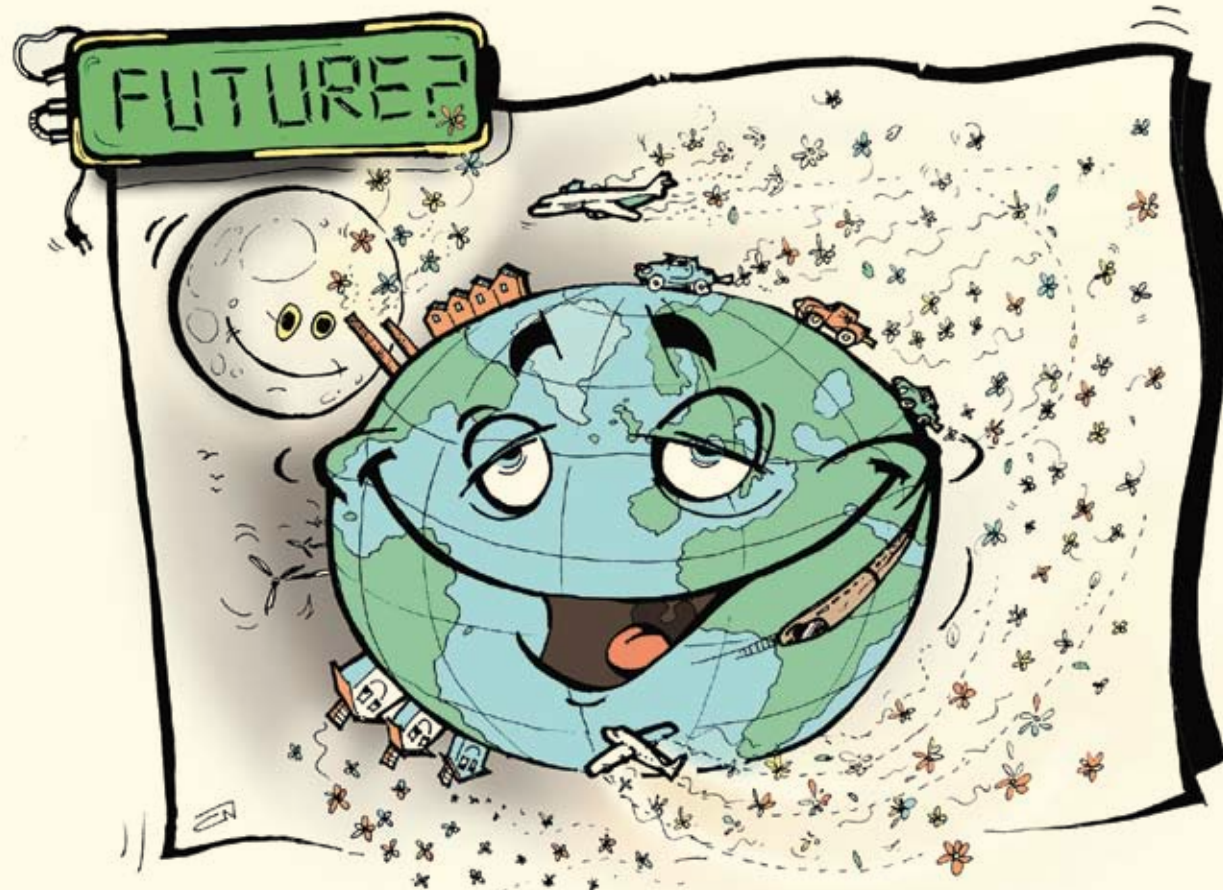
The easiest? There were many things that we did without problems. For example promotional campaign, flash mob on The Main Square, etc. – maybe they were not easy to organise, but it was great fun.

Any personal comments, ideas, suggestions?

The main theme of this project was very important for me. During the preparation time I got to know about many things I hadn’t known before. Now I’m more “eco” and I realised that informing people about environmental protection is not difficult and can be fun.

**“If you want to see an endangered species,
get up and look in the mirror.”**

John Young, former Apollo astronaut



Playing in a Major League

By Miguel Gallardo Albajar and Kadri Kalle



Running a European wide project does not only mean communication with your target group – the young people, but also external cooperation with the experts, stakeholders – the ones who have been involved in the issue for years and the ones who can take our message to higher and wider spheres.

When taking up *Sustaining our Future* project, we were sort of entering into a new world of knowledge and activities, which for sure has given us some of the greatest experiences in our volunteering life.

Our main external partner has been **IUCN – the International Union for Conservation of Nature**. Being the world's oldest and largest global environmental network, it was obvious that their experience and knowledge would be a huge support for us. IUCN representatives have always treated us, AEGEEans as equal partners, they have been enthusiastic about youth's involvement and contribution. We think it's also right to say that besides making professional contacts within IUCN, we have also got to know some very nice people.

But what did SuFu actually do outside AEGEE?

As one of the first things, we signed the **Countdown 2010 declaration** in June 2008, proposed by IUCN. With this we promised to contribute to raising the awareness on biodiversity issues among youth and joined a huge network of organisations working towards stopping the loss of biodiversity.

In October 2008, we participated in IUCN's **World Conservation Forum** in Barcelona – THE event for all people working for sustainability worldwide, taking place only every four years. Imagine one of the biggest and more modern conference venues in Europe, completely full of NGO workers, scientists, governmental

agencies, indigenous communities and sustainable business initiatives; every stakeholder who, working in any region of the planet, has something to do with preserving Earth balance, was there. So were we – by organising a **knowledge café “Sustaining our Future: shaping the role of youth in Europe”**. It attracted the attention of other youth groups working with environment in other areas of Earth, but also other NGOs that wanted to discover this initiative of an organisation completely new in the field. We realised that the people working in the field of environment have often a problem to reach youth with its message. We will not say that AEGEE can be the link between those two worlds, as this is a huge task that needs many actors to be involved. But for sure we can participate in that discussion with the experience of this project.

Probably the most thrilling moment for us was when we were offered by IUCN to write a **statement to world leaders** from the G8 group, for the meeting in Japan in 2008. The statement was written within few busy days and nights together by the SuFu team and AEGEE's Comité Directeur. Miguel was the one who handled the first draft that we worked on with great excitement – it does not occur every day that you write a message to world leaders. After countless e-mails and drafts, the final document was presented by IUCN to several sub-events at G8 meeting. Due to strict rules no additional papers, including ours were included in the final meeting. Yet, we are still proud to have taken part in the shaping of a document that stated how we, Young Europeans, the members of AEGEE, felt about the need to (re)act without further delay.

Last but not least, definitely one of our achievements was also winning the **national round of Charlemagne Youth Prize** in the Netherlands in spring 2008 and being represented in the final ceremony in Aachen.



Youth and Nature Conservation: The Future Is in Your Hands



Sebastian Winkler

Head of Countdown 2010
Secretariat



Did you know?

The value of global ecosystem services is estimated at \$16-\$64 trillion.

Biodiversity is in decline worldwide. The findings of the **Red List of Threatened Species™** published by **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** have recently revealed that species threatened and at risk of **extinction** worldwide are: **22%** of the world's mammals; **30%** of amphibians; **12%** of birds; **27%** of reef building corals; and **28%** of conifers.

Any group of living beings and things interacting with each other can be considered an **ecosystem** – therefore the loss of species has a great impact on ecosystems and the services they provide. **Ecosystem services** are the processes in which the environment produces resources utilised by humans such as **clean air, water, food and materials**. We need to protect these resources for the future generations.

The decisions made today are critical for the generations to come. Therefore it is essential that the youth is involved in the efforts to conserve biodiversity to ensure a healthy future for themselves and their children. Educating young people today about the importance of biodiversity for human life is essential to give future leaders the tools to conserve our environmental heritage. Raising awareness and improving understanding of the biodiversity crisis among youth is one of the focus areas of IUCN.

IUCN, in partnership with WWF and supported by Nokia, has created an online community website www.connect2earth.org for young people. This platform gives young people the opportunity to express their concerns, hopes, ideas and aspirations for and about the environment by uploading videos, pictures and comments. Also, it gives young people the opportunity to discuss environment related issues that matter most to them with experts, and to share ideas and solutions with their peers from other regions of the world.

Countdown 2010 echoes IUCN's commitment to young stakeholders by actively engaging them in the promotion of the nature conservation and by raising the awareness of biodiversity. Within its diverse network, Countdown 2010 aims to mobilise local action for biodiversity to help governments achieve the 2010 Biodiversity Target to halt biodiversity loss by 2010. The Countdown 2010 network includes more than 1000 partners coming from various sectors of society (local administrators, businesses, community groups, museums, academic institutions etc.).

Some Countdown 2010 partners have carried out initiatives to raise awareness of biodiversity specifically among youth. For instance, 12 cities in the United Kingdom have adopted Biodiversity Action Plans for School Grounds to conserve and enhance biodiversity on their grounds, increasing recycling, and education on wildlife habitats. Another initiative, implemented by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity which is the United Nations' body leading the celebrations for the International Year of Biodiversity – is the Green Wave. Schools and institutes organise tree planting events to make young people more aware of the need to preserve the environment.

Countdown 2010 recognises the next generation as a **huge talent resource** of creative and original thinking that can be used to develop novel solutions to environmental problems. This generation is filled with abundant zeal and has progressive ideals, and ample energy - the exact qualities needed to address the most pressing environmental challenges. AEGEE, European Youth Forum and A Seed, have already joined Countdown 2010 to strengthen the link between youth and biodiversity. Countdown 2010 supports these organisations in their efforts to reach out to the young people and invites the others working with young people to join the initiative to make this link even stronger.

Old Problems, New Solutions, New Generations

By Ben Vanpeperstraete, European Youth Forum

Since the Brundtland report, sustainable development (SD) took a central place in a myriad of policy debates. With the Rio summit in 1992, it was affirmed on the global agenda and it has been part of it ever since. From the local level, which is crucial for the implementation, up to the negotiations amongst the whole international community, people are challenged by this powerful paradigm. While providing a framework for a holistic and a systemic analysis of challenges, SD is however easier said than done.

While I'll briefly talk about the global level, it's imperative to always keep the **local level** in mind as it is the **backbone for any implementation** of SD. Therefore, there is a **need for a new Local Agenda 21** to give new impetus and energy to this level. We could act in a similar way regarding the sub-national, national and regional level governments as additional backbones of implementation. Also crucial for SD are the **National Councils** that we saw emerging in some countries in recent years, which reunite a set of relevant stakeholders such as young people. These Councils could benefit from a complete rebuilding in order to reinvigorate the work on national SD strategies.

On the global level we are approaching the 20th birthday of the Rio summit, where stakeholders embedded the idea of SD in the global political agenda. We can already start evaluating what worked and what didn't. At the same time we can provide answers to new and emerging challenges such as the nexus of environment and security that were visible in recent crises (food, water, energy, climate,...).

Next to the original agenda, it became clear that within a short time frame we need to move significantly towards the **green economy**. It is crucial to change all economic and financial institutions such as investment systems, banks, insurance companies, procurement, etc., into a system of sustainable production and consumption. Only then can we move away from an economy which is socially or ecologically "corrected" towards an economic system which acts as a driver of SD and poverty eradication.

This should be coupled by a strong global institutional frame-

work capable of delivering SD. We should look for ways to develop, revise and strengthen the current governance mechanism in and around the UN such as elevating the status of the Commission on SD within the UN system. Especially the **environmental pillar should be strengthened** and the UN Environmental Programme should be upgraded from a mere programme to a **more powerful institution**. Its increased political clout should make it capable of evolving into a powerful institution that can be on a par with the WTO and the World Bank.

Besides the upgrading and a thorough review it becomes vital to examine if we lack any tools in the current institutional framework and, if this is the case which additional ones do we need to develop. The Rio summit produced three global framework conventions (Biodiversity, Climate Change, Drought and Desertification) and we should now examine how they can be made work increasingly together, especially on issues relevant for all three. For example, the Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) could benefit from the establishment of a joint work plan. At the same time we should explore the need for new conventions on topics such as 'corporate social and environmental accountability' or 'public participation and justice in environmental issues'. The latter highlights the need to strengthen the participation of stakeholders such as young people in the decision making processes so they could unleash their potential power as agents for change.

There's indeed quite a set of issues which are crucial to be addressed in the next few years. Especially when we consider the fact that 30 years after the Brundtland report we see few achievements and many challenges remaining. But there is no other alternative but to address a broad range of issues faced by humanity with an approach based on SD. As it is young people who will face the consequences of the decisions made (or failure to take them) the most, they are the **moral stakeholders** in these debates – besides reminding us all to keep the yes we can"-attitude with their positive example.



In 2011 the "10 year framework programmes on sustainable production and consumption patterns" will be adopted. At the Johannesburg summit in 2002 (10 years after the Rio summit) leaders called for an agenda aiming to assist countries in their efforts to green their economies, to help corporations develop greener business models and to encourage consumers to adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

AEGEE & Sustainability: The Future

Following *Sustaining our Future*, the AEGEE Flagship Project 2010-2011 is called **Beyond Europe – Perspectives for Tomorrow's World**. The project aims at empowering young people to tackle global challenges. It mobilises youth on the global scale and provides a platform for a sustainable partnership between young citizens from several different world regions.

The challenges of today's world, more than ever before in the history of mankind, seem to be of global nature. Sustainable solutions to these challenges must be part of a collective effort. In a world ravaged by extreme poverty, hunger and disease, in a world at risk of the consequences of climate change, in a world of unequal resources and conflict, young people bear a special responsibility to make a positive change today for a brighter future tomorrow.

Taking up major thematic components already relevant to SuFu, the *Beyond Europe* project addresses a wide range of global challenges by launching four initiatives:

1. 'The UN **Millennium Development Goals** – A Challenge for Today's Youth?' focuses on youth contribution to the achievement of the MDGs. It mobilises young people from Europe, India and South Africa to participate in two Case Study Trips and a final conference.
2. '**Euro-Arab** – Understanding each other's challenges' brings together young people from Europe and the Arab region to develop an understanding of each other's and mutual challenges'.
3. A joint **Euro-US** student forum bridges the transatlantic division among young people and encourages active citizenship in an ever changing world.
4. **One World Convention** Series assembles different stakeholders with each convention tackling a particular global challenge.

Beyond Europe is another huge and ambitious effort putting forward a remarkable agenda: 17 events on four continents in two years empowering young people to tackle global challenges.

Christian Eichenmüller
project manager of *Beyond Europe*
www.aegEE.org/beyondeurope



As *Sustaining our Future* project was in many ways an introduction to sustainability issues in AEGEE, there are many new directions that we could strive to. Here are some ideas taken up by the **Environmental Working Group** (EnWG):

- A concrete follow-up activity of SuFu is **European Day of Environment**. Planting trees, seeing some movies, discussions at university or clean-up actions – this is not hard to do and you might be surprised by the results ;)
- Sharing your car with a few strangers, having a bus breakdown in the middle of the plain it's not a terrifying movie script. It's just part of a great experience that we want to highlight through our **travelling contests**. Meeting a new person, exploring interesting paths sound much better than the endless hours spent at dull airports!
- One of the future challenges is to increase competence of AEGEE members in the field of **education for sustainable development** – maybe in few years we'll also see trainings called "Sustainability European School"....who knows.

There are also many other important issues needing attention: the loss of biodiversity, the ever-growing consumption demands, etc. These all can be tackled by young people at AEGEE events!

The time of *Sustaining our Future* is over, but its history is still to be written... And why do we say that SuFu spirit is not over? Because EnWG is taking over! After all, one thing is clear: "AEGEE spirit is a renewable energy!"

Alexandru Ghiurca & Kadri Kalle
www.wg.aegEE.org/enwg

**“There are no passengers
on spaceship Earth. We are all crew.”**

Marshall McLuhan, sociologist



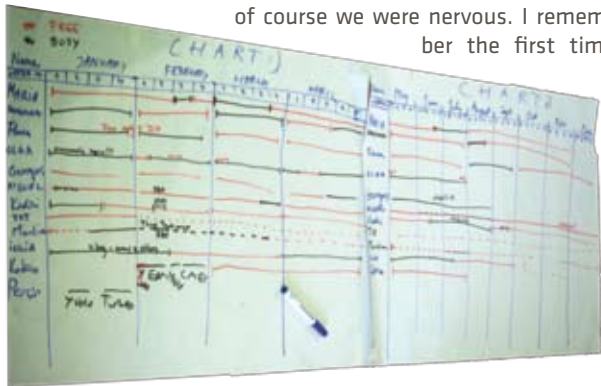
Once Upon a Team...

by Miguel Gallardo Albajar

The story of the SuFu Team and project actually already began at a New Year's event (2006-2007) called *Freezing Hot New Year in Wild Estonian Nature!* which was organised by two Estonian girls and a Dutch guy. And I was lucky to participate in the event where motivated young European people enjoyed workshops and debates, spiced with excursions into the Estonian nature (the incredible Soomaa national park). As a result, the seed of the future Environmental Working group in AEGEE was planted. A visit to AEGEE headquarters in Brussels helped us to define our plan and set up a temporary board that should present the new working group at our next general assembly – Agora Valletta in Malta, in April 2007. We were sure we had the arguments to convince our members and be democratically accepted by the Agora.

While in Brussels, we also got a suggestion to present a topic proposal for AEGEE's Flagship Project for 2008. That was something really ambitious for a **group of almost inexperienced members**, but at the same time, it would help us to make our message reach a lot more AEGEE members as well as the public. We **accepted the challenge** and prepared a short proposal with sustainable development as the main topic.

In Malta we had tons of illusions in our backpacks, and of course we were nervous. I remember the first time



I spoke in front of the whole assembly, more than 600 people listening to our green proposals: to include the environmental factor into AEGEE, to devote one year to promotion of sustainability among European Youth. We were for sure truly convincing, and the SuFu project was born! But it happened that another proposal got approved which brought the change of the length of the flagship projects. So suddenly we did not only have a brand new working group in our hands, but also a project for both 2008 and 2009!

In a Project Development Meeting in autumn 2007 we gathered opinions from active members of AEGEE on topics that SuFu project should address. But it was in Soomaa, during our second New Year in the wild, when the project was finally outlined. It was hard work and long sessions but also a gathering of an incredible group of people who enriched the project with their ideas and experience.

2008 saw our first events taking place and spreading the word in Europe. Our team met only few times in AEGEE statutory meetings, and mostly communicated via countless e-mails, msn meetings and even sms. The New Year tradition brought us together in Messolonghi, Greece, where we planned our impressive list of events for 2009 and found our source of inspiration: the SuFu Panda! We did some great creative work there and had incredible fun together, and came back home boosted for the intense 2009.

2009 was indeed a year of meetings which mostly took place in our own SuFu events, where we supported each other by helping with organisational tasks. There was also a team meeting in Brussels in the summer, private visits and of course, statutory meetings of AEGEE where the SuFu Panda was the brightest star.

It could not be otherwise: we needed a New Year meeting for the final evaluation. AEGEE-Alicante and my family had a great pleasure of hosting the team for the last time. Once again we had great food, organised some outdoor activities, the team-spirit was great and we did lots of work. Looking back, I see more than three years full of inspiring activities but above all, I see many friendships and personal experiences that have all kept us up when we needed some extra energy.



SuFu Team Members

These are the people behind Sustaining our Future, who devoted up to three years of their lives working towards more awareness about sustainability



SuFu Panda
The Mascott
AEGEE-Earth

Kadri Kalle
AEGEE-Tartu
content manager 2008
project manager 2009



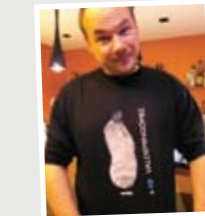
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Tiit Remm
AEGEE-Tartu
Results booklet
responsible



Massimiliano Marass
AEGEE-Trieste
SuFu logo
and designs



Thank you!

During these almost 3 years, there have been many people who one or another way were involved in the project. Here we would like to thank all of them for being part of this great experience:

Partial team members:

Begona Diez Martin
Harris Kantas
Katharina Schuster
Roxana Jivan
Thomas Brenner

The previous and current Comite Directeur members since 2007, and especially:

Laure Onidi
Dragan Stojanovski
Percin Imrek
Robin Verschuren
Agnes Leyrer

Participants and facilitators of Project Development Meeting in Sept 2007 Foundation AEGEE Trust Funds, in person of Bart Neerscholten

All organisers of European Day of Environment

Local organisers of SuFu events:

AEGEE-Aachen
AEGEE-Bratislava
AEGEE-Cluj Napoca
AEGEE-Europe
AEGEE-Kopenhagen
AEGEE-Madrid
AEGEE-Poznań

And of course all the participants of our events!

For making our team New Year gatherings so amazing:

Environmental Protection Students' Association of Eesti Maaülikool
Ecofighters
Olga's parents: Αλέξανδρος Δασκαλής (Alexandros Daskalis),
Καίτη Δασκαλή (Keti Daskali)
Miguel's mother Elena Albajar Molera

Our friends, families, loved-ones and all those who haven't been mentioned here by name.



**“When we tug at a single thing in nature,
we find it attached to the rest of the world.”**

John Muir



Glossary

Here is a selection of some terms that were used in the booklet or are otherwise connected to sustainable development. For more “sustainability definitions”, you can also check the website www.sustainabilitydictionary.com

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) – continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society.

ECOLOGICAL BACKPACK – measures the total amount of natural resources required to produce a certain product or service. Concretises the hidden flows, the materials used or transferred during the production phase which are not visible in the final product. Similar to ecological footprint concept, but result is given in kg, instead of ha.

ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT – measures in hectares how much land and water area a human population (a person, a city, a nation) requires to produce the resource it consumes and to absorb its wastes, using prevailing technology.

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES – processes by which the environment produces resources utilised by humans such as clean air, water, food and materials.

FAIR TRADE – an organised social movement and market-based approach that aims at helping producers in developing countries obtain better (more fair) trading conditions and promote sustainability. The movement advocates the payment of a higher price to producers as well as social and environmental standards.

GREENING THE ECONOMY – the process of refocusing businesses and infrastructure to deliver better returns on natural, human and economic capital investments, while at the same time reducing greenhouse gas emissions, extracting and using less natural resources, creating less waste and reducing social disparities. Examples: clean technologies, renewable energy, waste management, green buildings, sustainable agriculture.

GREENWASHING – any form of marketing or PR that links a corporate, political, religious or nonprofit organisation to a positive association with environmental issues for an unsustainable product, service, or practice. The organisation may offer some “green” products or services, but through PR tools the consumer is wrongly led to believe this “green” value system is ubiquitous throughout the entire organisation.

LIFE-CYCLE ANALYSIS/ASSESSMENT (LCA) – a systematic set of procedures for compiling and examining the inputs and outputs of materials and energy and the associated environmental impacts directly attributable to the functioning of a product or service system throughout its life cycle. Life cycle is the consecutive and interlinked stages of a product or service system, from the extraction of natural resources to the final disposal.

ORGANIC – describing food (both plant and animal) and other agricultural products (such as cotton), meaning the absence of pesticides, hormones, synthetic fertilisers and other toxic materials in cultivation. In some countries, “organic” has a legal definition.

PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) – the process of converting sunlight directly into electricity by using specially designed silicon cells (solar panels).

RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE – an energy source that is replaced rapidly by natural processes, without loss or degradation in quality. Some examples of renewable energy sources are sunlight, hydropower (water falling through a dam), wind.

URBAN SPRAWL – unplanned, uncontrolled spreading of urban development into areas adjoining the edge of a city. Characteristics include distance from employment and commercial centres, dependence on car travel.

WASTE MANAGEMENT – integrated strategy/process for the collection, treatment and disposal of (mainly) urban waste. The process may involve the adoption and use of landfills, composting facilities, recycling plants, and may lead to the production of fertilisers, natural gas and electric energy as the final products of the processes of transformation of the collected materials.

ZERO WASTE – innovative approach to waste management that aims at delivering zero waste to landfills, for example the organisation of events with very limited environmental impact, in which all resulting materials from human consumption are properly disposed, composted and recycled.

References and Some Useful Links

Some website sources both connected to our project and for further information on sustainability.

ec.europa.eu/sustainable – Main news and documents on sustainable development in EU

www.eea.europa.eu – European Environment Agency, gathers and summarises the main environmental information from all EU countries

www.iucn.org – International Union for Conservation of Nature, the oldest and biggest environmental networks in the world

www.iucn.org/about/work/initiatives/futureofsustainability – IUCN's Future of Sustainability initiative

www.countdown2010.net – IUCN's Countdown 2010 initiative for saving biodiversity

www.iucn.org/congress_08/forum/youth/ – Youth's section in World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, 2008

www.unep.org/wed – World Environment Day, the main coordination page managed by UNEP

ec.europa.eu/environment/greenweek – Green Week, an event organised in Brussels in June every year, by European Commission to all EU citizens

www.unep.fr/scp/publications/details.asp?id=WEB/0008/PA – UNEP Resource Kit on sustainable consumption and production

www.youthxchange.net – Another toolkit on sustainable lifestyle, by UNESCO and UNEP, plus a lot more info, like different facts and figures

www.corporateeurope.org – Corporate Europe Observatory, a research and campaign group working to expose the lobbying in EU politics

www.symbiocity.org – Swedish initiative for sustainable cities

www.greenguerillas.org – Green Guerrillas, an unique initiative to create and manage community gardens in cities

www.footprintnetwork.org – Global Ecological Footprint Network, easily understandable info about ecological footprint concept

www.onedidit.com/test – Calculate your ecological backpack, a test with nice visual examples

www.beyond-gdp.eu – Beyond GDP initiative (by EU, WWF, OECD, Club of Rome), redefining indicators of progress

www.happyplanetindex.org – Happy Planet Index, an alternative way to measure development in the world

www.wbcsd.org – World Business Council for Sustainable Development

www.international-sustainable-campus-network.org – International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN), uniting the main universities dealing with sustainability, info about common activities

www.panparks.org – PAN Parks, the European wilderness protection organisation, works for the protection, greater understanding and appreciation of Europe's wilderness areas

www.planeta.com – Pioneering ecotourism website, provides helpful resources for travellers and locals with a common vision of eco-friendly, people-friendly and place-friendly travel

www.ecotourism.org – The International Ecotourism Society, great resource about various ecotourism subjects. Download the Travel Green Guide – your guide to responsible travel options that benefit conservation, communities and sustainable travel.

www.responsibletravel.com – World's leading online travel agent for responsible travel

www.greentraveller.co.uk – Information on how to have a green holiday in Europe

thesecomefromtrees.blogspot.com – An example of how an idea can make a change through education and information

www.ecofont.com – How to make your printer more efficient just by installing some new font

Sustaining our Future project

www.aegee.org/sustaining

<http://sufunews.blogspot.com>

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Our Partners and Supporters

Sustaining our Future would not have happened without the support and help from different institutions and organisations outside of AEGEE, both on European and local level. This page is for them and we are saying them big thank you for believing in a more sustainable future and in us!



Kompania Piwowarska, Bank Zachodni WBK, Szkoła Języków Obcych Profi-Lingua

This is a sustainable booklet.



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Ecoprint is the leading environmentally conscious printing company in Estonia. We have been on the printing market for 15 years. We care deeply about environment. Our mission is to guarantee that the of Ecological Footprint our daily operations would be as small as possible, we focus on the environmental impact in developing technical solutions.

Today we can say that in our "green development" we owe much to our customers from the early days, including the University of Tartu, Estonian Fund for Nature, Centre for Ecological Engineering and others. A lot of interesting material went through printing house and through the exchange of thoughts between authors and clients the idea to develop environmentally friendly printing services was born.

Printing on environmentally friendly paper with natural inks is now self-evident for us. In addition to paper and ink there are also many other aspects of environmental protection to think about and deal with. Therefore you can find several effective and sustainable solutions in our printing house. For example we produce the small part of our daily electricity ourselves using three AirDolphin wind turbines. Solar batteries ensure the hot water in our household rooms and in winter the thermal energy released from our production machinery heats our rooms through ventilation system. Dumping system, which is necessary for the production of high quality prints, is based on the rainwater collected from our roof. We often entertain guests in our printing house to show everyone who is interested, that environmentally friendly solutions function at least as well as any regular wasteful practice and our publications still respond to the highest quality standards.

Read more: www.ecoprint.ee

sustainability

European Students' Forum

