



AEGEE @ World Conservation Forum (Barcelona, 5th-10th October 2008)

After Alexianne officially closed the AGORA, Kadri Kalle and I (Miguel Gallardo) went to the gym to finish packing and get ready for the last of the great parties organized by AEGEE-Aachen. We had to wake up as early as 7:30, but we could not miss the opportunity to say *C U Soon* to our friends; maybe at the EBM in Torino, or at the next Spring Agora in Magusa...

After arrival in Barcelona we attended the official opening of the **World Conservation Congress**, the main event organized by **IUCN** (the World Conservation Union) and with around 8000 participants. For all of you that don't know about IUCN, it is the biggest organization dealing with preservation of world diversity (biological and cultural) and sustainable development, from an objective and scientific point of view. It has been working on the field for 60 years, and its seriousness can be recognised on its advisor position for several governments and international organizations as the United Nations. There, we would represent AEGEE, the Flagship Project **Sustaining Our Future** and the **Environmental Working Group**.

The structure of the World Conservation Congress is double: The final week is just for IUCN members, and it works somehow similar to our Agoras. AEGEE was only present on the first week for the **World Conservation Forum**. As its name suggests, it was an open space for debate and discussion among people from Science, NGOs, Governments and Companies.

The Forum consisted of a big hall where pavilions of main thematic areas were. They were very visual, some full of wildlife pictures, other with videos and interactive screens, other made of recycled cardboard (even chairs and tables) or with straw-bales as chairs. They held presentations of books and projects, panel discussions and more; but most of the events happened in small rooms, 20 participants normally, with 30 of them happening at same time... Being just two of us, it was impossible to attend all the interesting events, but I believe we managed quite well to cover all our aims.



The main reason to be there, it was the Knowledge Café that we AEGEE held there, with title: **Sustaining Our Future: Shaping the role of Youth in Europe**. Our round table ended up being too small for all the people we gathered. We had representatives from student networks in Japan or India; from foundations and companies; from



conservation and education NGOs... We presented AEGEE, and we went into detail into the Flagship Project, to finally create a debate about several topics like the problem of increasing world population and growing differences between countries; from how to achieve an effective FR strategy, to new ideas to involve youth into projects like SuFu.

We were busy attending discussion panels, workshops hosted by NGO's, meeting with the people who presented posters on the Forum and mostly talking to everybody, trying to get contacts with future partners for the Flagship Project and AEGEE in general. It was always surprising to see the curious faces when we explained what AEGEE is and how we work... We also attended several workshops of the Business Night School, something new for us as we both came from the environment field of studies.

That Business Night School is an initiative of IUCN in partnership with the WBCSD (World Business Council for Sustainable Development). This is a organism created by leader companies from all over the world to collect best practices and lobby to raise standards on sustainability- sounds strange but that is what they say they do. It was through this WBCSD that we managed to meet a number of representatives of some very interesting companies and NGO's, like an innovative phone company and one of Europe's largest energy companies.



I left Barcelona a bit earlier, but Kadri stayed one day more and she also met with some of the important IUCN's people from the Countdown 2010 initiative (signed by AEGEE in June), to keep cooperation alive thematic-wise. We hope that from there we can transform all that contacts into positive and fruitful partnerships.

Wrapping up, it was an intensive week (almost) where we met many people that can boost the Sustaining Our Future Project, and that can become long-term partners for AEGEE. It was a great experience that I would not mind to repeat on 2012...

More information:

World Conservation Congress – <http://www.iucn.org/congress>

“Sustaining our Future” project – <http://www.projects.aegEE/sustaining>,
<http://sufunews.blogspot.com/>