



2006 ANNUAL REPORT

A message from the President

Dear Reader,

You are holding in your hands the 2006 Annual Report of the Association of Voluntary Service Organisations. It encompasses all the major events and activities that took place during the year.

In 2006, AVSO continued its activities as an advocacy organisation thriving at placing the issue of voluntary service across Europe and its still existing barriers high on the agenda of the EU decision makers.

AVSO continued to empower its members through information activities, policy monitoring, by organising partnership building seminars and study visits, as well as 2 very important events for the professionals of the sector, a lobbying seminar and a round-table discussion on the impact of voluntary service and the EVS programme.

In 2006 AVSO has also received a new "look", a new logo and a brand new web-site, which I strongly recommend for regular up-dates from the world of voluntary service.

One of the most important achievements this year has been the kick-off for our new research project entitled "The impact of long-term voluntary service" carried out by an external research team. You can read about this activity and all the hard work AVSO has invested into our issues in the following report.

In the name of the Board of Directors and the staff of the Secretariat I would like to thank firstly our members, whose engagement and professionalism has been the driving factor behind our activities.

Sincerely yours,

Massimiliano Viatore
President



INTRODUCTION

AVSO is an international non governmental organisation, offering a European platform for national and international non profit organisations active in the field of longer term voluntary service. Its mission is to improve, promote and broaden access to full-time voluntary service in Europe. Many of AVSO's member organisations are international networks and associations themselves. Through its member organisations AVSO represents more than 100 organisations across Europe.

AVSO aims to enhance transnational voluntary service in quantity and quality by offering support services to volunteer sending and hosting organisations, e.g. policy monitoring, organising training and partnership-building events and by identifying best practice and imparting expertise.

Based in Brussels, AVSO has become a representative and liaising body for its members in dealing with the European Commission in general and particularly with regards to support for long-term voluntary service programmes. AVSO enhances co-operation and interchange of ideas and practices between its member organisations. Many member organisations co-operate closely in the running of projects and programmes.

AVSO as a platform of NGOs brings the opportunity to its member organisations not only to be heard at European Level, but to be integrated in the policy making process as well.

Voluntary service across Europe can help building a solidarity based, altruistic Europe, help with problems such as poverty, persons living with disabilities, discrimination and it greatly contributes to enhance a sense of active European citizenship and belonging.

Our work, the work of our member organisations and the work of our volunteers change the daily life on millions of people.

Achieving the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), or any other objectives set out by governments, non-profit organisations, humanitarian organisations and the civil society will require the ingenuity, solidarity and creativity of millions of ordinary people through voluntary action. Efforts on the part of national governments, supported by the international community, can only complement what ultimately will depend on the full involvement of people worldwide



AVSO ACTIVITIES-SEMINARS

AVSO represents the voluntary service sector as a whole. As such we aim to increase the number of volunteer opportunities and improve the quality of voluntary service placements. AVSO organises partnership building seminars (PBS) and training workshops in order to facilitate the sharing of experience and the inclusion of new partner organisations in voluntary service.



Partnership Building Seminar, Bulgaria 09 - 12 March 2006

The "*Inclusion - Breaking the barriers of social and physical disadvantages through voluntary service*" seminar was held on Kyustendil, Bulgaria between the 9th -12th March 2006.

The overall aim of this seminar was to set up partnerships between organisations active at local, regional or national level by direct, personal and targeted contact in order to facilitate future voluntary service exchanges within the targeted groups. This is based on the belief that stronger partnerships bring about more and better-adapted voluntary service projects, thus facilitating the inclusion of marginalized young people.

The event provided an opportunity for existing and potential hosting and sending organisations to meet and exchange ideas and information about youth work and inclusion through voluntary service possibilities in their countries and organisations. It also acted as a forum to endorse the role of voluntary action in involving young citizens in their societies, in recognition of its economic, social and intercultural value. As a thematic seminar on "inclusion", the event offered subject-related activities touching on the factors of social exclusion, the inclusion of socially disadvantaged young people, as well as the inclusion of young people with physical disabilities.

The seminar was a continuation of AVSO's efforts to extend partnerships to pre-accession countries, by raising awareness about volunteering, civil society, inclusive approaches and the concrete needs of prospective partners.

We have to thank the facilitators and collaboration, such **CVS Bulgaria** (Cooperation for Voluntary Service), informing participants about the voluntary service sector in Bulgaria, the different projects they are running, the different stakeholders involved in the sector.

The **Bulgarian Youth National Agency** was represented by Manuela Radeva, the director of the International Youth Programmes Directorate at the Bulgarian State agency for Youth and Sports. She gave an overview of the rules and

procedures of the EVS programme – we thought this necessary and very useful, since even though some participants have been managing EVS projects for years, there were participants who have heard of this possibility for the first time, so for them this presentation was very valuable in the beginning of the seminar. Ms. Radeva also spoke a bit about the next programme phase 2007-2013, which contained useful information for everybody.

Finally **Tony Geudens**, trainer at the **Salto Inclusion Resource centre** gave an introduction to the work of the resource centre, explaining its place in the institutional setup, its tasks and how participants can use the Salto Inclusion website. He conducted an extremely informative and useful workshop entitled **International Mixed Ability Projects**, which is also the same title of the latest Salto Inclusion booklet, therefore he used this workshop group as a test-bed in validating the booklet before it was finalised.

As an extra to these very informative interventions, AVSO designed and implemented innovative methods to fulfil the aims of the seminar. These were Project Cooperation fair, interactive workshops, a visit to an on-going voluntary service project in Sofia, and intercultural events.

We are happy to receive confirmation that after the event which projects were implemented, that were designed during our seminar in Bulgaria.



Lobbying seminar, Brussels 27 – 28 April 2006



AVSO has been actively involved in lobbying for more money for the Youth programme in the new financial period of the EU 2007 – 2013. For this reason, AVSO organized a two days lobbying seminar held in Brussels during the 27-28 April. The main aim was to raise awareness to the importance and the impact of lobbying. Therefore the seminar focused among others on the decision making procedure at EU level-how

NGOs can lobby European institutions, how these lobbying techniques can be applied on national level. The seminar also aimed at clarifying AVSO's activities, as a bridge between its members and the EU.

The 19 participants were all staffs from AVSO's member organisations working with youth exchange and/or voluntary service.

First, AVSO's director **Agnes Uherezky** introduced the EU decision-making labyrinth and the lobbying techniques. Lobbying is an attempt to influence public decision making, by interest groups. Lobbying is also a communication tool as it is a give and a take of information. In order to influence the EU legislation, the decision making process has to become transparent.

Participants visited the European Commission; **Jens Mester** (Youth Unit of DG Education and Culture) introduced the future of the EU Youth programme-perspectives after 2007.

In the second day, participants visited the European Parliament where MEP Dan Jorgensen, from the Socialist Group and member of the Committee on Budgetary Control, the Committee of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety explained the impact of lobbyists in the decision making procedure and the service of visitors presented the whole European Parliament work process.

Then, **Liz Gosme**, policy officer from FEANTSA presented her activity: FEANTSA, European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless is also a platform representing NGOs working with homeless on EU level. Their main activities are research, lobbying, trans-national exchanges, research and communication. **Patrick Fève** from the Forum de Liaison introduced the ECOSOC and the Civil Society contact group, by presenting how the consultation with civil society works and finally, **Felix Barckhausen**, Counsellor for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, from the German permanent representation to the EU explained how national governments influence EU policies, programmes and budget.



Study Visit to Poland, Warsaw 19 – 22 September 2006

The objective of the project was to visit Polish NGOs and other organizations working with volunteering, voluntary service and youth programmes with a group of voluntary service professionals and youth workers from all over Europe. The participants gained insight into the lives of Polish NGOs, their challenges and activities, the situation and legal framework for volunteering and youth policies and the Third sector in general in Poland, and to establish relationships with these organizations for future projects within the Youth programme.

The event was a discovery experience in terms of the quality of the projects that are carried out in Poland, the innovativeness of their activities, the young staff members of the organisations and their professionalism.



It was a pleasure to cooperate with the Centrum Wolontariatu, (the volunteering centre in Warsaw) where a great number of projects were being coordinated. The Centrum has established a link between companies and projects with the corporate volunteering department. An innovative approach that has also given significant results.

Among their projects, one with which the participants were perhaps most impressed has been the collaboration between the Centrum Wolontariatu, Citibank and Habitat for Humanity, during which the employees of one of the Citibank branches helped renovate an old multi-story residential house in the centre of Warsaw – coordinated by Habitat for Humanity.

Participants of the study visit also had the opportunity to visit the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - Department of Public Benefit (Legal and policy framework for volunteering in Poland), where we gained an insight into the legislation in Poland for volunteering and the voluntary service.

The NGO's centre Centrum Szpitalna informed us about their services that NGO's receive in their Centrum, such as legal advice, fundraising suggestions and partnership match-making.

Last but not least the participants also got to know the Polish Robert Schuman Foundation - a foundation encouraging Active European citizenship through voluntary service projects.



Round-table discussion, Portugal 06 – 08 December

The last major event of the year was a seminar held in Lisbon thanks to the help of our member organisation VERTIGEM between 6th-8th December entitled "*The experience of a lifetime – the impact of EVS and voluntary service on young people programme*". It has been specifically designed to offer practical knowledge for organizations working with youth voluntary service.



The main objective of the seminar was to group professionals and voluntary service managers around a table to discuss and come up with an acceptable and valid methodology to measure the impact of voluntary service and EVS projects. In terms of long-term objectives AVSO wants to facilitate the dialogue between organisations and

the decision making level to be able to show for the benefit of such projects by having a European level nomenclature of indicators and methodology to measure the impact and effect of EVS and other voluntary service projects on the individuals, on the immediate community and on the economy.

Our Research team from proMente research was represented at the seminar by Steve Powell and Esad Bratovic. They were actively involved in the preparation of the seminar, sending preparatory questions to the participants, as well as in the seminar, also giving a short training session on Most Significant Change technique for measuring impact and facilitating workshops.

As Steve Powell pointed out based on their preliminary findings, the impact has never really be demonstrated in Europe, this is the reason why the research project of AVSO is so innovative and important for the voluntary sector.

Within the achievements of the seminar, we were very pleased to validate that our research has sparked off an enormous interest. All of the participants were interested and they agreed about the urgent necessity of a research in the impact that the voluntary service has in young people.

During the workshops the participants reflected about the dimensions for measuring the impact, the opportunities that such measure brings to us, the focus for the measure and the risks that the investigation can find.

In addition to the workshops, two representatives of the Portuguese Youth National Agency explained us the current situation in Portugal about the EVS and the "Youth in Action" programme. We also were very pleased to welcome for one day 2 staff members of the Executive Agency, who presented the new Youth in Action 2007-2013 Programme to the participants in the seminar and secondly to give us feedback about our project.



„The efforts of today, will be the achievements of tomorrow “



Fundraising

In this Year, AVSO started a particular project, our fundraising strategy that was based on a twofold objective:

- ★ increasing our financial capacity for running specific projects, which are only partially financed,
- ★ covering administrative costs in order to be able to continue and expand the activities of the organisation (despite the cutting of funds, mostly due to the decrease in funding from the European Commission)

Aiming at that, AVSO is possible donors, i.e. private organisation involved activities. We address our of their interest and internal are trying to expand



updating a database of foundations, banks and in social projects and charity possible donors on the basis charity programmes and we constantly our research in

this field. Doing this, we reach also more visibility in the local network and abroad.

When a donor is found, we will keep them informed on our project results and involved in our activities and its logo will appear on our website, newsletters and dissemination documents.

We monitored the funding programmes of the EU institutions on an on-going basis, informing also our members on the possibility to access the grants.

Within this kind of new activities are: preparation of marketing materials, newsletter spread among the members, and constitution of an Advisory Board in charge of drafting the annual strategy plan and of the fundraising-network identification.

In line with this, AVSO organised a fundraising seminar for our member organisations only to be held at our next General Assembly on the 7th of November 2006. The training was conducted by the Director of THINK Consulting Solutions, with a 20 years experience of work with not-for-profits, funders, regulators and international umbrella bodies. (<http://www.thinkcs.org/index.php>)

Moreover, we asked visitors of our website to capitalize on our growth and these strengths. If they wish to support us in our activities, they could make a transfer to our bank account with the communication "donation":

As representative fact, any "amount" of donation could give to thousands of volunteers the possibility to help people living with disabilities, elderly or marginalized people, to contribute to cultural work, to combat discrimination and to work with education, environment protection, 'grass roots' initiatives.

A special thanks to our volunteer fundraiser Chiara Battistelli, who put in a lot of hard work and energy into this project.

Lobby Efforts

During 2006 the Budget discussion for financial perspective for 2007-2013 has occupied most of the headlines in the specialised press in European Union.

The budgetary questions are some of the most sensitive issues in the European construction. They have been the origin of the most important crisis between member states, for example "the crisis of the empty chair" in the seventies.

The budget of the European Union has encountered a constant progression during the Unions construction, as well as in real terms as in percentages of the GNP.

This progression is the result of the different developments of the competence of the European Union.

For the first time and at the door of the European Union to 27 Members, the budget was supposed to decrease and a final agreement was not drafted until the very last minute. Of course the biggest cuts were intended for the citizen's agenda, justice, security, education and culture. All the competences that were pointed out as crucial for the European Identity would decrease in time. This meant to us that the Youth Programme which depends on Culture and Education budget line will decrease as well and the content and quality of the Youth programme would be seriously jeopardized.

This was the time, when AVSO decided to get directly involved in the Process. Lobbying and raising awareness among the Members of the European Parliament and through our members the national authorities for the great risk for the objectives that we want to achieve. We strongly demanded to maintain the youth budget at a level, at which the previous standards of the actions can be continued, supplementing with innovative elements, offering more possibilities to more beneficiaries of the programme. We argued the fact that less than 915 million EUR, the objectives of the programme cannot be achieved.

We started an intensive campaign together with the European YOUTH Forum. This cooperation was translated in an advocacy statement signed by both of the networks **Agnes Uherezky** on behalf of AVSO and **Ewoud Roes** on behalf of the European Youth Forum.

In a second stage of the negotiations we incited our contacts to get in touch with their national agencies and national governments to do pressures over their respective governments.

AVSO also prepared a couple of in-depth briefings to the member organisations explaining the 2007 – 2013 financial perspective, the different budget headings and as well keeping them up-to –date about the decision-making process and the state of play.

Concerning the final adopted budget our and the European Commission's greatest fears for a 34 % cut to the proposed budget did not happen, only a 3% difference occurred compared to the planned budget, thus we can conclude that it was a cause worth fighting for and mobilizing our members.



Policy Efforts

One of AVSO's main objectives is to promote Voluntary Service by lobbying national and European policy makers working in the field of Youth policies and Voluntary Service.

We offer to our members' information on policy development; we give them the opportunity to be represented and heard in the EU political arena.

We provide these services by monitoring the European political agenda, participating in stakeholders meetings at the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee, and taking positions in different European decisions and establishing partnerships with other European Networks and Organisations.

Towards a European Voluntary Service Programme with higher dimensions

2006 was a very exciting year in terms of policy developments at EU level concerning volunteering and voluntary service. This year, AVSO delivered a package of specific proposals to the Vice President of the European Commission, Margot Walström, for their explorations for a larger-scale EU Voluntary Service Programme. This document was based on the Commission call to the Economic and Social Committee to explore volunteering and voluntary service with regards to their role in creating and reinforcing an active European Citizenship, their contribution to the economy and the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy and its role in building solidarity-based European Society.

AVSO provided a complete definition about the terms of volunteerism, volunteering and Voluntary Service, we argued the chance that voluntary service gives us for tackling social problems such as poverty, homelessness, isolation of elderly people and others such environmental problems and discrimination. We showed the opportunity that voluntary service brings to young people in order to become active citizens in the European society.

Moreover, we pointed out the weaknesses of the European Service Programme such as the increasing of the budget, the recognition of its educational value, the extension of the age of volunteers, and the simplification of the bureaucracy.

We suggested the adoption of thematic programme years and we encouraged a more in-depth examination of new areas for the voluntary services where volunteers could be involved.

Active Participation at EESC

Agnes Uhereczky was invited as an expert to the EESC for the draft opinion of the Section for employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship on Volunteering: its role in European Society and its impact.

This was an achievement for us since it was the first time that the EESC's doors were opened to AVSO. We are really satisfied with this fact, because this gave us

the recognition as experts in the field and constituted an input in our efforts to networking with other social organizations.

The contribution that AVSO gave to this Opinion Document, thanks to the participation of our Director was extremely valorised by the participants. AVSO's comments and proposals have been taken into consideration for the final document.



Important events for AVSO and the Voluntary Service Sector

EVS 10TH ANNIVERSARY: "10 Years of solidarity and active citizenship":

2006 has been a successful year for AVSO in terms of visibility. We felt that voluntary service are higher on the European agendas and that we have more access to the highest decision makers. Not only did we celebrate the 10 years of AVSO as an International NGO together with the 10 years of EVS programme.

AVSO played an important role at the 10 years celebration of the EVS Programme where our president Massimiliano Viatore was among the key-note speakers, as well as Agnes and Helena were rapporteurs of panel discussions. Besides, the preparation of the event.

Jan Figel opened the Conference on the 27th November and pronounced sentence "EVS is one of the best instruments to nurture our sense of humanity and solidarity" he announced the intention of the European Commission to enhance voluntary service and create a partnership with the United Nations Volunteers. Specially touching for us was the recognition, expressed in his speech, for being the bridge between grassroots level organisations working with voluntary service and the EVS programme and the Commission.



The intervention of the Commissioner was followed by two panels; our president Massimiliano Viatore was one of the key-note speakers in one of them about the future of voluntary service, and expressed the interest of AVSO on organising a European conference to bring existing or new national civic services become closer and cooperate within each other.

The panels were composed as well by other important figures in the field of voluntary service like Odile Quintin, who is the Director- General of DG Education and Culture, who pointed out the importance that EVS has in the European active citizenship and the European value of Solidarity; Ad de Raad of the United Nations Volunteers who expressed his agreement on having a more strategic partnership with the European Union; Babette Nieder former member of the cabinet of Edith Cresson told us how the idea of creating the EVS programme happened.

The Conference continued with 12 different table's discussion. AVSO was present at different tables and three of our members were appointed as rapporteurs: Nico

Aguilar (Member), Agnes Uherezky (Director) and Helena Ruiz (Intern). The conclusions were presented to the plenary session by the rapporteurs.

The Commission's Vice President Margot Wallström assisted to the presentation of the different table discussion and made a statement in which she pointed that she was confident on doing the "voluntary service the Erasmus of the solidarity" and she advocated for starting to measure the impact that voluntary service has in the Young people, sending communities and hosting communities. We are pleased to count with the presence of the vice-president Wallström and to recognise in her speech an important number of features of the proposal that we submitted to her cabinet on 2006.

Moreover, in order to finalise the event Pierre Mairesse, Director for youth, sport and relations with the citizen thanked the participants for their involvement and ideas.

We hope that this active involvement in the 10th Years of the EVS was the proof of the good relationships and cooperation with the Commission for the next year.

Hearing at the European Parliament "Mainstreaming Volunteering in EU Policy"

On Monday 5th December, coinciding with the International day of the volunteers a Public Hearing was held at the European Parliament. The event was co-organised by the MEPs Marian Harkin (ALDE, Ireland) and Gisela Kallenbach (Greens, Germany) as a follow-up to the establishment of the working group at the European Parliament on volunteering activities which was created on June 2006.



The first panel of the event was called "What can the EU Institutions do to actively support volunteers?" Where Agnes Uherezky presented the points of view of AVSO in relation with the creation of such working group: we think that this is the first step of a long-cooperation with the European Parliament which is the European institution of the citizens, we want to put the voluntary activities in the agenda of the political decision makers and we are strongly convinced that for such approach we have to introduce a European-global campaign similar to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). She took the opportunity to remember to the audience that voluntary service is not only EVS. European Member States have a huge number of voluntary service programmes that should not be disregarded at all and she advocated for paying more attention to the senior volunteers and the intergenerational view on the voluntary activities, remembering that an increasing number of organisations are already doing it at the national level. Moreover, she pointed the difficulties that volunteers have sometimes concerning the visa issue. She announced as conclusion that for 2007 AVSO has prepared an advocacy campaign on the VISA ISSUE and thanked to both of the European parliament members for giving this place to speak to the voluntary sector.

In the second panel AVSO was as well represented by Davide di Pietro. This panel was called "What are the recommendations for Inter-Generational Volunteering?" Davide presented the activities that Lunaria is carrying out in Italy in which the inclusion of senior's volunteers in the voluntary projects has been a success in

relation to the personal impact of senior volunteers and the effect that they have in young people when the group of volunteers are mixed in different frames of age. Lunaria's projects should be considered as one of the best practice carried out in Europe at the moment working with Inter-Generational Volunteering.

Christine Boon-Falleur (European Commission, DG EAC, D4, Civil Society) who also participated in the panel discussion stressed that the current policies and programmes, for example the EVS, the Grundtvig programme and "Europe for citizens" provide a good starting point for further developments; Mary Davis, Taskforce on Active Citizenship in Ireland which used the Special Olympics Ireland and the preparation for the event to justified how volunteering enhance the sense of community and solidarity.

Volunteers were as well presented in the Hearing, giving examples of best practice and contributing with their experience to the improvement of the volunteering activity conditions in Europe.

The Closing Statement was complicated to achieve after so many important and interesting contributions. Both members of the parliament were impressed with the testimonies and all the interesting topics the hearing dealt with. They pointed that for further works on volunteering in Europe, we would have to tackle the problem of the legal status of volunteers such taxes and visa issues; Promoting the voluntary activities trough events; the adoption of a passport skills; a European Charter on Volunteering; financial support for organisations; more inter-generational programmes and the adoption on 2007 of communication on volunteering.



Communication Strategy.

AVSO developed and enhanced tools for improving its communication in 2006.

We have renewed our Image. For this occasion we have launched a new logo, new website, new marketing materials and a new newsletter!!! These are the main tools that we can use to share knowledge, ideas and enhance partnership building and networking.

Through an enhanced communication effort AVSO aims at reaching out to more organisations then ever before, making ourselves more visible, and thus capitalizing on the knowledge and expertise not only of our direct staff but also our members and the network partners.

The image of AVSO has to be as colourful and dynamic as their members are. We widely thought that this new logo is more in accordance with the active people who work in the member's organizations and their volunteers.



Our website contains valuable information for clarifying concepts, actual news and a FORUM where our members and workers on the field (by request) could share and discuss their ideas, their fears and their knowledge. Through the regularly updated website the communication is a learning process that will bring many benefices in the near future.



www.avso.org

The link between us, our members and the specialized public will be reinforced thanks to our new newsletters. It's composed of different kinds of information related to voluntary service and other European issues such youth, culture, education, environment, etc. We will report in brief about the meetings attended on behalf of our members as well that we will provide a detailed inform about call for proposals, tenders and different kind of funds available monitored by the AVSO team in Brussels. (If you wish to receive the AVSO newsletter you should send a request by email to info@avso.org)

Under this communication campaign, we have created as well new marketing materials for networking, constituted by an information flyer and a folder, in order to promote AVSO and their Members.

All this efforts will be translated in a deeper knowledge of AVSO, their activities and members.



YOUTH RESEARCH STUDY

YOUTH RESEARCH STUDY: "THE IMPACT OF LONG-TERM VOLUNTARY SERVICE IN EUROPE"

The objective of the study is the overall assessment of European impact studies on full-time voluntary service (over 20 hours/week), and it will concentrate on national and international long-term programmes, identifying the relevant studies that have been carried out so far. The focus will be on the impact of programmes for young people (aged 16-30 years) that do not require professional competence or specific skills. It will make an overview of the impact dimensions stated in the

studies regarding the volunteers, their friends, families, and other beneficiaries: people in hosting/sending organisations, organisational activities, local community, regional and national level. The study will explore how was the impact defined and measured, especially regarding the long-term effects: personal and professional development, active citizenship, civil society engagement, bridging social capital. It will determine whether the impact of service away from home or abroad differs from that of service in the community of origin. The research will evaluate whether the social capital development and, in the case of international service, the impact of bridging social capital and fostering international development have been documented.

It will cover countries with developed full-time long-term voluntary service programmes where the probability of existing studies is high. The researcher will establish contacts with organisations, European institutions and National Agencies of the YOUTH Programme in order to identify unpublished studies produced within voluntary service networks for national and international exchange of long-term volunteers. As some documents will be in languages not spoken by the researcher, several volunteers covering those languages will assist him/her. A baseline of country comparative data will be collected: themes of activity, length, volunteers' age groups, programme types.

As scientific reference frameworks on civic or voluntary service are emerging, the research will analyse the missing links in assessing voluntary service impact in the long term. It will propose steps (development of quantitative and qualitative research tools) to overcome the identified omissions and an agenda for research needs. 110 copies of an approximately 50-page report will be printed and disseminated to stakeholders of youth and social policies at national and European level as well as to voluntary service NGOs.



The research is carried out by a team of researchers at ProMENTE Social research organisation in Sarajevo, lead by Head of research Steve Powell. The research project is financed by the funds "Erinnerung und Zukunft" of the Foundation "Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft" in

Germany, the Center for Social Development George Brown School of Social Work Washington University in St Louis and AVSO's member organization AGDF.

The research project started in September 2006 and will last until April 2006. During the research project AVSO and Promente keep regular meetings and updates, as well as the seminar in December in Portugal serves as a mid-term milestone for the project, during which the experts in the field validate the research methodology and the work already carried out.

AVSO is responsible for the communication and marketing of this project, and will organize several events to promote it during the spring 2007.



MEMBERS

AVSO welcomed 2 new members in 2006:

Lunaria is a non-profit, non-confessional and independent association, free from political parties' control and influence. It was founded in 1992 and it carries out research, training, and communication activities on fair economy and third sector, migrations and globalisation. It promotes initiatives concerning international volunteering and youth policies. Through its activities Lunaria experiments new forms of active participation and social transformation inspired by the principles of justice and social solidarity, democratic participation to community life, guarantee of civil, social and human rights in the national and international context.

ICP Partneriaeth was founded in February 2000. The aim is to promote European volunteering opportunities for young people in Wales.

The main areas of work are promoting the European Commission's Youth Programme in Wales, especially the European Voluntary Service (EVS) scheme, and delivering intercultural training.

They are an approved EVS hosting co-ordinator and sending organisation. ICP Wales is also one of the approved EVS training providers for Wales.

We welcome our new members on board, and we wish a fruitful and successful cooperation to all of us.



GOVERNANCE AND STAFF



ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

AVSO recognises the need to validate its work and strategy with the member organisations, but in addition to this we would also like to involve professionals, who have worked for a number of years in the field and have accumulated invaluable experience and expertise.

For this reason in 2006 a new supporting body in the history of the organisation has been created. This consists of an Advisory Committee whose aim would be to validate our strategy and activities. We believe that this initiative will bring more professionalism and visibility to AVSO, as well as to help us greatly improve our work, and thus benefit the entire sector.

The first three (and perhaps final) members of the Committee have already committed themselves to helping AVSO. They are Henrik H. Kröner, Secretary General of the European Movement International Secretariat, Gräfin Soscha zu

Eulenburg, former Vice President of the Red Cross and Ariane Rodert, Strategic planning manager at the Swedish Forum for Social Voluntary Work.

The first meeting of the Advisory Committee will take place in the spring 2007 together with our Board meeting.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

During this year, the newly nominated Board members were hard at work:

Massimiliano Viatore is the **President of AVSO**. He is the Director of AFSAI, a non-profit NGO working since 1958 in the field of intercultural education, active with both long and short-term exchanges with both European and non-European partners.

He is also active in consulting with the Italian local authorities, and in supporting NGOs in Meda countries in developing youth policies.

At AVSO Massimiliano Viatore, together with the other board members is responsible for the overall strategic plan, the activities and budget, as well as managing the members.

Emma Hansen, our **Vice President** is at the same time a Coordinator at the Volunteering Church of Sweden. Volontär i Svenska kyrkan is a co-operation between the national Pastoral Ministry Commission in Church of Sweden, and Church of Sweden Youth. The placements are mostly parishes in Church of Sweden.

Emma Hansen, together with the other board members is responsible for the strategic planning and the overall activity for AVSO.

Renate Lange is **Treasurer**. Renate works for AGDF – Aktionsgemeinschaft Dienst für den Frieden e.V., a German association of peace organisations as a policy adviser for voluntary services in the EU. She is also the Belgian coordinator for ASF - Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste (Action Reconciliation Service For Peace). ASF is a German volunteer service organisation, which sends out volunteers from Germany to other countries.

At AVSO she is responsible with the other Board members for the overall strategic planning, with special regard to the financial aspects of AVSO.



STAFF:

Agnes Uhereczky is the **Director at AVSO**. She has overall responsibility of running the AVSO office; her tasks include project management, lobbying, contact to members and policy monitoring.

In the first 5 months of 2006, **Marta Bulik** served her **EVS** voluntary service at the AVSO secretariat. Her main tasks involved the lobbying campaign as well as she designed and wrote the application for the Study visit to Poland that took place in September.

Tine Manvoutouka was an **intern** at AVSO for the period 1st May 2006 – 31st July 2006. Her main tasks included the writing of the Action 5 XL proposal “Voluntary service as a tool in bridging cultures and fighting discrimination” as well as the reorganisation of the AVSO web-site.

As from the 11/09/2006 until 15/03/2007 our **intern** is **Helena Ruiz Fabra**. Her internship is financed by the Leonardo da Vinci programme. Helena is working mainly with policy monitoring, project preparation, assisting with the research project and information management (writing the newsletter).

As of the beginning of November 2006, **Cristina Agrillo** starts her 12 months **EVS voluntary service** at AVSO. She is involved with Youth policy at EU level, with project preparation and management, the newsletter and the seminars.

During September and October 2006 AVSO also benefited from the cooperation of **Chiara Battistelli**, a **volunteer**, who is responsible for our fundraising campaign. We are really happy to have hosted Chiara in our Office.

A big Thank you to all of the hard working staff members of the AVSO Secretariat!