



EDITORIAL

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Don't you also feel how busy these last months have been? We are continuously hoping for a more quiet period to catch our breaths and get some admin work done, but seems like this won't happen, the voluntary service field is moving fast and we have many exciting projects in the pipeline. We are now finalising the proposal for our new research project on impact, and we hope to start the project very soon.

We are also busy organising two events, one is a cooperation with the Johns Hopkins University, the King Baudoin Foundation and the European Policy Centre, to organise an awareness raising event in Brussels about the UN NPI Handbook on measuring the economic impact of civil society and volunteering. We are now agreeing on a final date, and as soon as we know, we will keep you posted.

The other event is the Global Conference of the IANYS network, further information about it is further down.

Usually Christmas is a time for saying thank yous, however I think we should say thank you more often, therefore thanks to all of you, who dedicate so much time and energy to our joint cause, who believe in our work, and who support us in many different ways.

Enjoy the Newsletter!!!

The AVSO team

AVSO-THIS MONTH

AVSO Lobbying and Social Activism seminar 15-16 April 2008 REGISTRATION STILL OPEN

Civil society organisations and volunteers want to make a change. However, they might not always know how, when, or using and applying which tools. Networking, lobbying, activism are all terminology widely used, but what do they really mean?

The objective of the seminar is to demystify lobbying and advocacy work by showcasing real examples of success and failure, by meeting the real European key decision and policy makers, to hear from them, what do they appreciate and when do they close their doors. Because policy makers and politicians need lobbyists - exactly how and what for will also be explored during the seminar.

Visits to the European parliament, the European Commission and other key institutions will illustrate the complexity and also the real life aspect of the lobbying and advocacy work of the 17 000 lobbyists in Brussels. In an interactive workshop session at the end, participants will have the possibility to adapt the theory and practice they heard during the seminar to their own contexts and organisations.

The seminar will take place at the AVSO premises in Brussels - jointly with visits to the European institutions (European Commission, European parliament, European economic and Social Committee) and other organisations of interest.

The registration process will take place in 2 steps:

1. There will be an early bird registration option, until the 25/02/2008:
 - 120 EUR for organisations who are members of AVSO
 - 160 EUR for organisations non-members of AVSO
2. After the 25th February the registration prices will be:
 - 120 EUR for organisations who are members of AVSO
 - 190 EUR for non-members of AVSO

The participation fee will cover the conference folders, other administrative costs, coffee breaks, a sandwich lunch for the first day, and a warm lunch for the second day.

Participants have to cover their own travel and accommodation costs, AVSO will help booking accommodation for a reasonable price close to the venue.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to **contact Agnes Uherezky at agnes@avso.org**

AVSO Board Meeting and Visit to ICJA and ASF.

The last AVSO board meeting took place in Berlin where we had the opportunity to meet with ICJA and ASF. Each year we aim at organising one or two Board meetings outside of Brussels, hosted by our members, and this brings closer the secretariat and the Board to the members and reinforces the cooperation inside the platform.

We were glad to discover the latest developments of both organisations and meet in person with the people who make our work possible each day.

Who is ICJA? ICJA Freiwilligenaustausch weltweit (Volunteer exchange world wide) started to organise the first exchanges in 1949 – German students travelling to the US to learn about democracy and farming. In the beginning it was only one-way, but quickly American volunteers started to travel as well to Germany in order to learn and gain cultural understanding. Soon other countries joined the programme.

In the 60s they broadened the movement, not only to work with reconciliation or post-conflict, but also working with inequalities in the world: African countries, the Philippines joined...and this is how ICYE International started. At the end of the 90s ICJA stopped the school exchange programmes, and from then on only works with voluntary service. ICJA is an active member of AGDF and founding member of ICYE International.

ICJA works with several programmes: FSJ – Zivildienst abroad; ICYE/ICJA programme; EVS; Intergenerational – pilot phase ends this year but they hope to continue; Weltwärts – the large-scale new voluntary service programme.

During the conversations, we discussed a few ideas how to cooperate in the future and ICJA raised their concerns regarding the new *Weltwärts programme*, which is bigger than Peace Corps and that actually will change the voluntary service scene in Germany. The programme will rule out the own ICYE/ICJA programmes. In addition, the volunteers are exposed to a high media coverage which brings a risk, if something harmful should happen, and could have a negative effect on the projects and the future of voluntary service. To know more about ICJA: <http://www.icja.de/content/service/Home/>

In the second day, we were hosted by ASF (Action Reconciliation for Peace). ASF/ARSP works for a peaceful co-existence in the world, works to support the weak in society, and works for a humane future. ARSP volunteers care for survivors of the Nazi concentration camps and are listeners, conversational partners, and helpers in everyday life. Working with the psychologically ill, homeless, refugees, or people with disabilities the young

volunteers get to know the living situation of those who are disadvantaged in society. They work in community projects and in anti-racism initiatives to influence political processes.

ASF will celebrate their 50 Years next May in Berlin, to mark the occasion they are organising a big event and inviting partner's organisations.

We had the honour to discuss in detail the vision of ASF regarding the relation between voluntary service and policies. The main outcome of the meeting has been the launch of a working group at directorate level to analyse the situation of voluntary service and to develop a deep AVSO position. To know more about ASF, go to <http://www.asf-ev.de/>

The Board and the Secretariat would like to thank both organisations for your hospitality; we are looking forward to continue working together!!

AVSO took part at the Stakeholders consultation on Youth volunteering regarding a new initiative of the European Commission.

The European Commission invited NGOs involved in volunteering to a meeting on the 25th February 2008 in Brussels. The purpose of the meeting was for the Commission to listen to the concerns, wishes, experiences and expectations of these NGOs in view of a new political initiative on volunteering of young people. The aim is to go beyond already existing EU documents on youth and mobility, to go deeper and to identify which concrete measures are needed in order to facilitate and to advance volunteering for young people and mobility of volunteers.

The consultation was not related to the Youth in Action Programme only, the aim is to formalise some political objectives for the Member States concerning youth volunteering. The EC has observed that the sector is completely fragmented and diverse, but a sector with a lot of potential, and they would like to further and support the cause of youth volunteering even beyond the EVS programme. They strongly believe in the benefits of youth volunteering at trans-national level for young people and for Europe, concerning some more specific issues like youth unemployment, life long learning, inclusion measures, intercultural dialogue.

Among the measures they would like to advance are quality standards, legal status of volunteers, inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, employability of young people; recognition.

AVSO participated at the meeting with different interventions regarding the key- topics; and after the event itself we consulted with our Member organisations, who gave us some very important input, which we compiled in a document and sent to the European Commission. We complemented this position paper with a quick on-line survey through Youthnetworks, the website managed by the AVSO member NoBorders. The tool has proved to be a very effective help in such occasion only in two days YOUTHNETWORKS obtained nearly 200 hundred responses. The position paper will be published at the AVSO website very soon.

Invisible Heroes Campaign- PARTICIPATION REQUIRED!!!!

The purpose of the campaign is to get recognition for all those many hundreds of thousands of volunteers serving daily in Europe, the "Invisible Heroes" of our societies. Every volunteer should be recognised for his/her contribution to society, the time and energy they invest in helping others and making Europe a better place to live!

We ask volunteers serving currently and during the next 12 months in Europe to send us their photo to invisibleheroes@avso.org, specifying the project and city of the service as well as their name. In the first phase of this visual campaign we will collect the photos and up-load them to a separate website linked from the AVSO website. As soon as the special

"Invisible Heroes" campaign website is up and running volunteers and their organisations can up-load their own photos directly to the site.

Please encourage your volunteers to participate and spread the information that will be arriving during the campaign!!!! www.avso.org

SAVE THE DATE!!! 8th Global conference on national youth civic service programmes, 19-22 November 2008, Paris

IANYS, the International Association for National Youth Service (IANYS) aims to stimulate and facilitate the exchange of information about national youth service (NYS), and to help realise the promise of national youth service. The last global conference is a few years back, but now IANYS, under the new leadership of a recently formed Global Council is coming back stronger than before. The new President of IANYS is Dame Elisabeth Hoodless, the Executive Director of Community Service Volunteers (CSV), the UK's largest volunteering and training charity, and the Secretariat of IANYS is hosted by ICP (Innovations in Civic Participation) in Washington D.C. AVSO is not only involved in the Global Council of IANYS, Agnes Uherezky being one of the council members, but jointly with ICP and Unis-Cité we are also organising the 8th Global conference of IANYS, which is not only for IANYS network members, but for any organisation involved, or wanting to be involved in youth service programmes or policies.

In the conference there will be a training session for organisations or government representatives new to youth services, after which the main conference will start. Among the topics discussed will be a showcase of different country models, and a number of thematic workshops, such as funding mechanisms, scaling-up existing programmes, structured social inclusion elements, etc. First and foremost the conference will be a unique opportunity to build a strong global community for youth service practitioners, researchers and government representatives. The conference is under the patronage of the French Presidency of the EU.

If you are interested in participating, write to us, and we will keep you informed!

MEMBER'S CORNER

OPEN – 2008 new members' recruitment.

AVSO is continually welcome new members. This year the process has been advanced due to the change of our General Assembly from November to June.

AVSO is open for all non-profit (non-governmental or public) organisations which have an interest in the development and promotion of long-term voluntary service in Europe.

AVSO offers:

- Interest representation and advocacy
- Policy Monitoring and regular funding up-dates.
- Share research findings
- Multiple Networking opportunities to European and International Level
- Resources and Knowledge Center
- Support in understanding and implementing the legal Status of volunteers
- Make the civil society voice stronger in Europe

We would be very glad to welcome new organisations in the course of our activities. As our next General Assembly will be held in June, in this edition the **deadline for applicants is 18th May 2008.**

You can check the procedure in our website (http://www.avso.org/members/members_join.html) or you can request further information at helena@avso.org. We look forward to hearing from you soon!!!!

ICP Partneriaeth organised "On the Level - Disabled Access through EVS".

ICP organised a seminar in Cardiff Bay, 12-15 February 2008 (on behalf of the UK's National Agency for EVS) entitled "On the Level - Disabled Access through EVS". Trainers from disability organisations in Wales set the tone, with sessions examining the Social Model of Disability and the concept of Disability Equality Training. There were some very practical and hard-hitting recommendations on ways that the involvement of disabled volunteers in the EVS programme can be improved. The conclusion brings very important remarks such: need for more uniformity in decision-making on issues like the granting of exceptional costs and reinforced mentorship funding; insurance problems for disabled participants.

Have a look at the seminar blog for more information, for seminar documents and lots of photos! <http://accesstoevs.myevs.net/>

The Member's Corner is a free space at AVSO Newsletter for all Members and their staff. You can post press releases; adverts for your activities, contributions, statements, reflections about the situation at your organisation or your country, etc. For contribution to the Member's corner, please contact Helena Ruiz Fabra at helena@avso.org

NEWS FROM EUROPE

Education, youth and Culture Council of the European Union: exchanges of views on intercultural Dialogue.

The council adopted a set of key messages regarding the implementation of the European Pact for youth. In addition the council held an exchange of opinion on the basis of the EU presidency paper on intercultural dialogue and young people. During the meeting it was highlighted that national youth policies can pursue and provide support for intercultural Dialogue, they emphasised among other the role of organised civil society, the involvement of youth organisations and non-governmental organisations as well as the importance of voluntary activities.

The Council adopted a set of key messages that intend to be a contribution to the conclusions of the forthcoming European Council.

More information:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_applications/applications/newsRoom/loadBook.asp?BID=92&LANG=1&cmsid=357

What skills will Europeans need in the years to come? First EU forecast of skill needs is published

Cedefop, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, presents its first forecast of skill needs up to the year 2015. The study "Future skill needs in Europe: medium-term forecast" concludes that demand for skills and qualifications is being driven upwards in most occupations, including in so-called elementary jobs, by the continuing rise of the service sector and sweeping technological and organisational changes. More

Information: www.cedefop.europa.eu

High level experts discuss future of mobility in EU.

The European Commission has set up a new High Level Expert Forum on Mobility, and its inaugural meeting took place on 24 January 2008. The Forum will discuss extending the reach of the Erasmus exchange programme, increasing exchanges of young people, improving support for mobility in vocational training or adult learning, and raising the degree of movement by young artists, entrepreneurs, and volunteers.

Promoting a "personal adoptive language" strengthens multilingualism and intercultural dialogue, concludes the EC group of intellectuals

The Group of Intellectuals set up to advise the Commission on the contribution of multilingualism to Intercultural Dialogue delivered its report, entitled 'A rewarding challenge'. The group, chaired by Amin Maalouf, in the context of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008, makes proposals on how languages can foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. The full report of the Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue is available in 22 languages at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/languages_en.html

Commission presents policy priorities for 2009

The Commission has today presented its Annual Policy Strategy setting out its political priorities for 2009. It outlines the Commission's policy objectives in five priority areas: growth and jobs, climate change and sustainable Europe, making a reality of the common immigration policy, putting the citizen first, and Europe as a world partner. More information:

http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/synthesis/index_en.htm

Call for Experts - Studies on Youth Policies

The Regional Capacity Building and Support Unit for the EuroMed Youth III Programme is launching a call for the recruitment of Experts to undertake research on the development of youth policies in the Mediterranean partner countries signatories of the Barcelona Declaration. The relevant studies will ultimately be published.

More Information: <http://www.euromedyouth.net/spip.php?article63>

Commission adopts 5th Report on Union Citizenship

In February 2008 the Commission has issued its 5th report on Union citizenship. The report focuses on the legal core of citizens' rights, namely the right to move and reside within the EU, the right to vote and stand as a candidate in European and municipal elections in the Member State of residence, the right to diplomatic and consular protection in third countries, the right to petition the European Parliament and the right to apply to the Ombudsman. The Report also takes stock of advances in areas closely related to citizenship in the wider sense, such as equal treatment in terms of nationality and the protection of fundamental rights.

The Flash Eurobarometer public opinion survey of EU citizenship published simultaneously reveals that Europeans are largely aware of their status as citizens of the Union but would like to be better informed about their rights. More Information:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/news/information_dossiers/5th_citizenship/index_en.htm

ESODOC

ESoDoc is the right workshop for documentary film makers, new media professionals and NGO field workers, who want to experiment the new boundaries of audiovisual production. You should be interested in working in developing countries, with citizen's activism, to use the media for human rights and environmental protection. **Application deadline for**

ESoDoc 2008: 18th March. More information: <http://www.esodoc.eu/>

MISCELLANIOUS BRIEFING

CIVICUS WORLD ASSEMBLY

The CIVICUS World Assembly is a forum for international civil society representatives to get together, exchange ideas, experiences and build strategies for a just world. The world Assembly will take place next 18th – 21st June 2008 at Glasgow More Information: <http://www.civicusassembly.org/>

International Voluntary Service Organizations suspends activities in Kenya.

Voluntary service organisations which have projects in Kenya are evacuating all volunteers from the country due to further outbreaks of violence and increasing ethnic tension. Among the VSO whose VSO's international programme director, Richard Hawkes, said "While some parts of the country remain operating 'business as usual', the speed of change means that if volunteers stay we cannot guarantee that we will be able to get them out of the country safely if further trouble erupts. Volunteers will be flown to their home country as soon as possible".

Greek volunteers replant fire-ravaged forest.

Greek scouts plant trees in Penteli suburb (Jan 2008, AFP). Athens, Greece: Four months after a fire devastated one of the last forests on the outskirts of Athens, Greek volunteers on Sunday planted around 2,000 pine saplings in an initiative backed by the US and British embassies, the agriculture ministry said. "We had an impressively large turnout, so much so that there were not enough trees to go around," an agriculture ministry source told AFP. Around 600 volunteers including the deputy US and British ambassadors planted the trees at two locations in Penteli, some 20 kilometres (12 miles) north of Athens where 950 hectares (2,300 acres) of forest were lost in August.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS AND TENDERS

Citizenship - Connecting people throughout Europe. The deadlines for submission of applications under the new program "Europe for Citizens" for funding request from 2008 on are scheduled as follows:

- Action 4- Active European Remembrance projects, deadline for submission the **30th April 2008** for projects between 1st September 2008 and 31st August 2009.

More Information: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/funding_en.htm

European Youth Foundation.

Category B.

In this category the European Youth Foundation (EYF) may support, for example: specialised publications (such as training manuals); newsletters or magazines produced by international youth organisations or networks; information campaigns; exhibitions and the production of audio-visual materials etc; the development of web sites or the production of CD-Roms; the production of posters, badges and stickers; research projects on youth-related issues. In the same category, the EYF can also grant study visits enabling youth organisations and networks to make new contacts in Europe and thus extend partnerships and develop co-operation. Priority will be given to projects using new information technologies and those with an innovative nature. The next deadline for applications is: **1st April 2008** for activities taking place between 1 January and 30 June 2009.

Category A.

It is an international youth meeting, which can take the form of a seminar, conference, workshop, camp, festival, etc. The next deadline for applications is **1st April 2008** for activities taking place between the 1st January and the 30th June 2009.

<http://www.eyf.coe.int/fej/>

Lifelong Learning. The main deadlines are:

Erasmus: Mobility **14 March 2008**

Leonardo da Vinci: Transfer of Innovation multilateral projects 14 March 2008

Transversal programmes **31 March 2008**

Call for proposals - 'Youth in the world': cooperation with countries other than the neighbouring countries of the European Union / 'Youth in action' Programme.

Deadline 15 April 2008. This call for proposals seeks to support projects promoting cooperation in the youth sector between Programme Countries and partner countries other than the European Union's neighbouring countries.

AVSO FUNDING TABLE: At the beginning of last year, AVSO published a funding table for the period 2007-2013. Please, notice that it is still published in the Youthnetworks and in the AVSO documents page.

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