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## Editorial

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

And here comes the April edition of our newsletter. We had a very exciting 2 weeks behind us: not only did we have a great meeting with the Advisory Committee and the Board, but AVSO also participated at the different Forum and event as the Youth Summit in Köln. As well, we attended the United for Intercultural Action in Madrid and we travelled to meet with different organisations in Bonn. These two events will be reported in detail in the next issue. There are different calls of proposals which are very interesting for all of us, please have a look at the end of this issue.

Also, it is our pleasure to announce, that Karin Wimmer has been nominated as the new AVSO Board member by EDYN. Welcome Karin!!!

The AVSO team



## NEWS FROM EUROPE

### **European Parliament Racism and holocaust denial debated at Parliamentary hearing. European Parliament Fundamental right commission 20/03/2007**

Racism and holocaust denial were at the centre of a hearing on the 20<sup>th</sup> March in Parliament. The German Presidency of the EU has made the fight against racism a priority and has pledged to revive a stalled European "Framework Decision" on racism and xenophobia. One of the Presidency's proposals is to make denial of the Jewish holocaust a crime - a move that has prompted a fierce debate.

According to the latest figures by the EU's fundamental rights agency, racist acts went up between 20% and 45% last year depending on the country. At present all EU members have legislation outlawing racist conduct or incitement to racial hatred. However, the scope varies from country to country and a recent "Eurobarometer" survey indicated that 4 out of 10 Europeans were unaware such legislation even existed.

The German Presidency is clear that they would like to see denial of the Jewish holocaust made a criminal offence. At present the proposed framework decision doesn't go that far (it would not outlaw Swastikas for example). Last month the UN passed a resolution rejecting any denial of the Holocaust. Some EU states already have laws making either denial of the holocaust or the showing of Nazi regalia a crime. In Austria last year right wing British historian David Irving was released from jail after serving part of a sentence for denying the holocaust took place.

The issue has real potency as it will impact just how the historical debate but also how national governments deal with neo-Nazi movements. These organisations target not just Jews but any minority group they deem somehow "foreign". Martine Roure favours making holocaust denial a crime although at the hearing Stavros Lambrinidis MEP disputed this saying; "I wonder if sending some people to jail for their words would have saved us from the holocaust."

The European Parliament had a taste of the debate close to home recently when controversial Polish MEP Maciej Giertych published a history booklet that was denounced as anti-Semitic and xenophobic. This led to Parliament's President delivering a public rebuke to Mr Giertych in the Chamber.

The Framework Decision was first proposed in 2001 and aims to ensure that all racist and xenophobic acts are punished. In its original form it envisaged the extradition and surrender of those suspected of such acts. It also aims to encourage judicial cooperation across the EU. The text of the Decision has been frozen in the Council of Ministers since 2005. The European Agency for Fundamental Rights supports the introduction of the Framework Decision. [Full Text](#)



Supported by the Youth  
Programme of the European  
Commission

## EU signs new UN treaty on disability rights. Brussels, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

EU signs on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007 UN treaty on disability rights. It was the first time that the EU signs a UN Human rights convention. The convention aim to ensure that people with disabilities enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis.

Vladimír Špidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. "I welcome the unprecedented involvement of people with disabilities throughout the negotiation process and am proud that the EU and its members will be among the first to sign the Convention. It is a success for the EU as it reflects all the core elements of our disability strategy: anti-discrimination, equal opportunities and active inclusion. It also shows that Europe is at the forefront of strengthening rights for people with disabilities worldwide and is an important achievement in the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All."

Member States have given a mandate the European Commission to negotiate and sign on behalf of the Community on matters falling under Community competence, but the EU Member States themselves will also sign the Convention individually. [For further information.](#)

**Open day Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May. European Institutions will be opened to the citizens for a day of information, activities and events.** AVSO will have a stand. We have invited YAP/AGDF and ASF (based in Belgium) to share with us, maybe other voluntary service organizations also. The secretariat has still different material for a few of our members, but if you can send materials for this event we will bring with us.



## AVSO THIS MONTH



### CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST -LOBBY SEMINAR II EDITION- 2007

AVSO is planning to organise its 2007 Lobbying Seminar, for those members, who weren't able to participate the first time, or who wish to participate again. The preliminary date is set for middle of June 2007. The seminar will take 2 full days, 9.30 - 17.30. AVSO will arrange food and accommodation and the participants will have to cover their travel and accommodation costs, as well as a participation fee of 90 EUR for member organisations and 120EUR. AVSO will book accommodation at a reasonable price for the participants. The call for participation has been recently open for AVSO non-members. We would like to limit the number of participants to 25. If you are interested in participating send a mail to [info@avso.org](mailto:info@avso.org) The Schedule will be similar to 2006: Introduction to the EU decision making mechanism and lobbying techniques through specific examples; Visit to the European parliament, meeting with an MEP - how they cooperate with lobbyists ; Visit to the European Commission, meeting with Commission officials working with the Youth programme/Life Long learning programme; Visit to the Economic and Social Committee; Visit to a foreign press agency - meeting with journalists - how do they communicate the EU ; Meeting with a Permanent representation of a Member State - the preparatory work for the Council; Meeting with another EU level civil society organisation; etc.

In addition, this year the participant will attend the Research results: "The impact of long-term voluntary service in Europe" will be presented at the European Parliament and which aim is to show how to shape policy through research results.



### AVSO AT EUROPOCKET



During the Last February Miriam Reyes from Europocket filmed a small item about AVSO and Voluntary Service. Agnes and Helena were interviewed about different issues concerning the role of volunteers, the role of voluntary service in Europe, what AVSO ask to the European Institutions. The aim to Europocket is to reach young people with European topics. In order to see the item, [click here.](#)



### ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETS FOR THE FIRST TIME ON THE 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL IN BRUSSELS

AVSO recognises the need to validate its work and strategy with the member organisations, and in addition to this we would also like to involve professionals, who have worked for a number of years in the European and Voluntary field and have accumulated invaluable experience and expertise. The Advisory Committee aim is 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. The four members of the Committee met by the first time on the 24<sup>th</sup> April in Brussels. They were Henrik H. Kröner, Secretary General of the European Movement International Secretariat, Gräfin Soscha zu Eulenburg, former Vice President of the Red Cross, Ariane Rodert, Strategic planning manager at the Swedish Forum for Voluntary Work and Søren Kristensen who has 20 years of expertise on youth policy and mobility.

They discussed with the Board and the Secretariat Staff about Membership, Fundraising and Policy Plan. We think that, the meeting was amazing and that all their comments will be useful for future developments at AVSO. The secretariat will translate the meeting in an action plan that will be ratified by the Board. We thank already them in name of our Members and we hope tat this fruitful operation will be for a long time!!

## ★ Youth event 2007 - „Equal Opportunity and Social Participation for all Children and Youth“by Agnes Uhreczky

On behalf of the German EU Council Presidency, the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth between the 13 and 16 April, around 170 young people from 34 countries discussed intensively the issue of equal opportunity and social participation for all children and youth, during the Youth Event organised under the German EU Council Presidency in Cologne, Germany.

AVSO participated at the event; I gave a short presentation in one of the workshops entitled *“Volunteer services promote the active citizenship of young people-Volunteer work by young people as a contribution to social integration and empowerment”*. The target questions raised by the organisers were on:

What forms of voluntary work can specifically promote the social integration of young people?

How can we generally make volunteer services to foster the benefits for social engagement?

How can we win especially those young people unconnected with education (school drop-outs) for volunteer work?

The issue of “Social and Professional Integration of Young People” will determine the youth policy agenda of the European Union until midyear 2008. Germany, Portugal and Slovenia have agreed to jointly place emphasis on this topic during the 18 months of their team presidency, whilst at the same time complying with one of the targets of the European Youth Pact. Under this common motto, the German EU Presidency is particularly pointing out the subject of “Equal Opportunity and Social Participation for all Children and Youth”. It was therefore using this motto for the Youth Event as well.

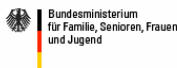
The event seemed a good opportunity to bring together young people from many different countries and cultures and histories and discuss these very important issues among themselves, and then deliver a joint message to the national and European decision makers. I have to say seemed, because not knowing how the young people evaluated the event themselves, as an outsider, some aspects could have been organised better. It was a moment of pride looking around the packed plenary room, seeing all these enthusiastic young people, feeling their energy. But on closer look, their faces were all white. And none of the girls wore a veil. Young people with disabilities were indeed represented, by two participants. Is this really a true reflection of the diversity of our young generations? Or of the young people who can afford being active in youth councils and simulation youth municipalities. Where were all the young people this conference was about? Who made the selection of the participants, and how?

In terms of the programme, very high level European policy makers took to the stage encouraging the young people to make their voices heard. Some of their statements could be heard already 10 years ago, if not more, how we must match the training offer to the labour market needs to be able to tackle youth unemployment. The young participants were encouraged not just to speak, but also to listen to the EU Institutions, on what processes are possible for their structured dialogue, and which not. Afterwards we could visit the exhibition space and network for the next 4 hours - including the lunch break. Then, the workshops started, and were going on for 3 days.

The end result is a very disappointing *“Conclusions of the Working Groups and Action Plan”*. In the introductory message even the participants complain of the poor organisation of the event. There are some good ideas, some not so new, but overall it won't make much happen at European or National level. Perhaps it even happened too soon after the Rome Youth summit?

I would like to hope, that the EU is not just using Youth events and young people for its own promotion. I hope that there was some kind of evaluation of this event to make sure, that the mistakes will not be repeated again in another Youth event.

Conclusions can be downloaded on the [Youth Portal](#).



## KARIN WIMMER NEW BOARD MEMBER

Karin Wimmer has been appointed by EDYN as Board member and representative in AVSO. Karin will be at the AVSO's BOARD replacing Emma Hansen. As her predecessor, she works for Voluntär I Svenska Kyrkan, member of EDYN in Sweden. She is involved in the management of volunteers and projects. She has a background in Social Science and Sustainable Development and an amazing experience in Youth organizations like ICYE- Sweden as an Organisation Manager and an International Programme Coordinator. She was involved as well in Peace Quest. Karin will be Secretary in the Board that has now four Members. During the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April the Board got together in Brussels for following up the discussions with the Advisory Committee into action for AVSO.



## MEMBER'S CORNER



**Arte Diem: Promoting a Culture of Peace through Art" is an important project of YAP in the field of peace education.** Arte Diem is an international youth exchange project which has been organized annually since 1999 in different countries (in Europe and outside of Europe) with the support of YAP's member organizations. The idea is to gather young people from different backgrounds to reflect about art and how it can serve as a tool to build a peaceful society. The last edition of Arte Diem took place in Haifa (Israel) in December 2006/ January 2007 coordinated by Baladna, YAP's branch in Israel. About forty young people from around the world joined the project. They learnt more about the conflict between Israel and Palestine and how to use art and creativity to spread the message of peace in the communities. More impressions about the Arte Diem in Israel are documented in a video which you can watch here [ARTE DIEM, the movie](#) [click here](#)

The next edition of Arte Diem will take place in Iceland (August 2007). More information's about it will come soon on YAP website! <http://www.yap.org/>



## BRIEFING

**Brussels 13, April 2007. First European Survey on Foreign Languages Skills.** The Communication adopted on 13 April by the European Commission presents a European Survey on the foreign language skills of pupils in the EU Member States. The survey will test pupils' skills in their first and second foreign languages learned. Ján Figel', Commissioner in charge of Education & Training said : "the purpose of this language indicator is not to rank individual countries, but to identify efficient practices in language learning in order to enhance the exchange of good experiences between the Member States".

**Brussels 17, April 2007. 26 young Europeans witness on the ground the European Commission's development assistance in Rwanda.** Between 17 and 21 April, 26 young Europeans aged 16-18 and their teachers will visit Rwanda with the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel. There they will meet young Rwandans and get to know their country and history. They will also gain direct experience of the added value Europe brings to the world via the Commission's development and humanitarian aid policy. The young people from the 25 Member States of the EU are winners of the Development Youth Prize awarded at the first European Development Days held in Brussels in November 2006.

**Brussels 24 April, 2007.** The European Year of Equal Opportunities for all has established a partnership with the Eurovision Song Contest 2007. Vladimír Špidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities said: "The Eurovision Song Contest is a perfect platform for informing people about their rights to equal treatment and for spreading the benefits of diversity all around Europe. What better framework than a vibrant European-wide entertainment event bringing together all the different cultures and flavours of Europe?" More Information [www.eurovision.tv/](http://www.eurovision.tv/)



## CALL FOR PROPOSALS AND TENDERS

★ **Call for Tender in PROGRESS: Service contract for the establishment and maintenance of a network of experts in gender equality, social inclusion, health and long-term care. Deadline 12/07/2007** The contract therefore entails the constitution of a network of experts in gender equality, social inclusion and health and long term care. The duration of the contract is for one year and can be renewable 3 times. Countries included Europe'27 and EFTA countries. More information in Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. [More Information](#)

★ **EU-Canada Call for Proposals 2007 - Transatlantic Exchange Partnerships (TEP) Deadline 12/06/2007**

The European Commission is pleased to announce a new call for proposals to develop Transatlantic Exchange Partnerships (TEP) between the European Union and Canada. This call is subject to the renewal of the EU-Canada cooperation agreement in higher education, training and youth. The call for proposals covers the following action: EU-Canada Joint Study and/or Training Programmes. This Action provides support for consortia of EU and Canadian higher education institutions and vocational education and training institutions to promote and develop joint study and/or training programmes and to implement student/faculty mobility. [More Information](#)

★ **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008. Open call for proposals –DG EAC/07/07. Deadline 31/07/2007.** The Commission is launching this call in order to co-finance a series of emblematic actions on European Scale aimed at promoting Intercultural Dialogue, reaching as many people as possible. The objectives should be arise awareness of the objectives of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 and understanding the meaning and importance of the Intercultural Dialogue. Financial contribution from the Commission is 80% of total eligible cost of each project. [More Information.](#)

★ **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008. Restricted call for proposals- DG EAC/08/07. Deadline 31st July for projects co-financed on 2007 budget and 14 September 2007 for projects co-financed under 2008 Budget.** The Commission is launching this restricted call for proposals in order to co-finance events and initiatives at national level and regional level with a strong European Dimension aimed at promoting the objectives of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, through directly involving or reaching as many people as possible. With particular attention to civic education and learning to appreciate other people and their differences. The bodies responsible for submitting Projects to the European Commission for financial support. Financial support will be granted to 27 projects (1 by Member State). It is foreseen to co-finance 4 to 7 national projects out of 27 in 2007 and to 20 to 23 national projects in 2008. 50% of total eligible cost of each project. [More Information](#)

★ **Call for proposals for projects promoting innovation and quality in the youth sector youth in Action Programme. EACEA/02/07 Deadline 30 June 2007.** Action 4.4 Youth in Action Programme. The intention is to support projects that seek to adopt, implement and encourage innovative and good quality approaches in the fields of non-formal education for young people and youth work. The projects will aim to support the integration of young people with fewer opportunities living in suburban areas in Europe. Eligible countries Member States, EFTA and Turkey. Projects must included 4 different countries. Co-financial cooperation no more than 65% of the total eligible cost. [More Information](#)

★ **Call for proposals EACEA/03/07 Youth in the world: cooperation with countries others than the neighbouring countries of the European Union. Youth in action Programme. EACEA/03/07 Deadline 31<sup>st</sup> May 2007.** This call for proposals aim to support projects promoting the cooperation in the youth sector between Programme Countries and partner countries other than the European Union's neighbouring countries. Aim: promote the exchange of experience and good practice in the field of youth ad non-formal education, contribute to the development of youth polices, youth work and the voluntary sector, developing networks within youth organisations. Co-finance 80% of a project's total eligible expenses. [More Information.](#)