

Editorial

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

The General Assembly is getting closer and closer. In the meantime, very important developments for AVSO have taken place; we received in total six applications for new members. We were busy with the preparation of our Annual Grant application and the promotional activity at the European Parliament for the Interest Group in Volunteering. Once again we would like to hear your opinion and valuable feedback on a number of issues, such as AVSO's Opinion for social Inclusion and volunteering, our new DOCUMENTS page on our website and we hope to receive your contributions after the Memo regarding the Member's Corner as soon as possible.

We look forward to seeing you at the AVSO's General Assembly on the 19th-20th November in Brussels.

Enjoy the Newsletter!!!

The AVSO team

NEWS FROM EUROPE

The European Commission launches its 2008 Work Programme. Last 23rd October the European Commission adopted its work programme for 2008. It shows the focus for prosperity; solidarity; security and freedom, and a stronger Europe in the world. For the first time, the programme includes inter-institutional communication priorities for 2008. In order to foster transparency in the Commission activities the work programme introduces a new chapter identifying issues on which the Commission will work during 2008 but that could lead to new initiatives in the years ahead. Priorities:

1- Growth and Jobs: efforts to use EU cohesion policy to implement the Lisbon Strategy at regional level. The Commission will continue to look at new ways to promote education, training, research and innovation as part of its Lisbon Strategy.

2- Sustainable Europe: tackling climate change, energy, the reformed common Agricultural Policy.

3- Integrated approach to migration: Commission will propose a common policy on migration. Together with social integration, migration represents one of the most important challenges of our time. This means combining well-managed labour migration, supporting circular migration and promoting education and integration of migrants in the broader context of managing demographic changes.

4- Putting the citizen first: The social balance will be the basis for develop a social agenda for Europe-an agenda that promotes among others how the EU can work in partnership with the Member States to fight discrimination and deliver access to opportunities for all Europeans. In addition the 2008 year of Intercultural Dialogue will be help to established new cooperation across Europe in the field.

5- Europe as a world partner: the union enlargement policy will continue extending peace and stability, prosperity, democracy, human rights and the rule of the law across Europe. The Commission will also examine new activities to implement the millennium Development Goals. The Commission will start the preparation of activities for the European Year of Creativity and Innovation in 2009 connecting this year with the Programmes of Lifelong Learning, Culture, Youth in Action and Europe for Citizens in its Rome to foster innovation and creativity.

In addition, to these priorities the Commission will strengthen its efforts to better communicate Europe and to involve the citizens in the decision-making process. These efforts will be pursued and consolidated in 2008 with an emphasis on partnership with other Institutions and the Regions.

More Information at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0568en01.pdf

Rotterdam European Youth Capital 2009. This is an initiative from the Rotterdam Municipality who plan to have an echo across Europe and establish and continuing Tradition. The motto of the event is for, by and with young people. The impact that the organisers want to achieve is that it will mark the festive start of the new role that young people play in the city: they will become full participants in all the youth related matters. More information at the www.reyc.nl

5 December - International Volunteer Day. The United Nations Volunteers launched a website in order to offer opportunities for individuals and organisations to share their videos, photo's, events, materials, ideas and suggestion about the Day. <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/int-l-volunteer-day.html>

AVSO-THIS MONTH.

AVSO AND THE JOURNEY OF PEACE IN MOLLINA

From the 1st to the 7th October 2007 Cristina Agrillo, on behalf of AVSO, participated to the "Journey of Peace" organized by YAP, one of its members, at the CEULAJ (Centro Eurolatinoamericano de Juventud) in Mollina (Spain) in the frame of the University on Youth and Development. It has been a Journey to know more on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants: who they are, what their rights are, what are the policies implemented at national, European and international level concerning them. But it has also been an opportunity to commit ourselves and to understand how we can facilitate their inclusion in the hosting countries societies as volunteers representing of volunteering organisations.

We have been provided with a lot of information (main source UNHCR) to go deep into the topic of the migrants and they met many experienced speakers working at different levels (local – witness of a Palestinian refugee in Syria making an EVS experience in a refugee centre in Brussels, national – Red Cross Belgium and Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado, international - AVSO) and in the different areas (international and European law and policy making, volunteering and social inclusion) concerning the refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

AVSO contributed with a session focused on the results of its last research on the Inclusion of young immigrants in voluntary service projects. The participants have been asked to reflect on how their organisations could be more inclusive and to share common challenges (lack official policies on equal opportunities or diversity, lack of Intercultural training of staff is not systematic, regular or mandatory) and best practices (different communication tools for different target groups, definition of the target group, intercultural training for the staff) related to their own experience with young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. More about the University on Youth and developments: The University on Youth and Development is an activity jointly organised by the Spanish Government (INJUVE), the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the Spanish Youth Council (CJE), the Latin-American Youth Forum (FLAJ) and other international youth organisations.

Since its first edition in 2000, the University takes place once a year bringing together representatives of the youth organisations and youth movement from all over the world who gather in the CEULAJ (Euro-Latin-American Youth Centre) to discuss, train and be trained as well as to take political action around the main issues in the global agenda.

The main theme of the 8th edition was the youth perspective on the Alliance of Civilizations process. The discussions were aimed at determining the contribution that international youth can make to the Alliance of Civilizations and the role to be played by youth and youth organisations in the process; as well as at defining the input that youth can provide to the dialogue of civilizations and cultures. Furthermore, discussions were also articulated to reach some proposals on the youth contribution to the initiative on Intercultural Dialogue undertaken by the Council of Europe.

The main goals were:

- to create a political space for action to acknowledge the role to be played by youth in global development
- to initiate and encourage a debate aimed at defining the role to be played by youth in the elaboration of development policies and cooperation for development initiatives
- to facilitate a process aimed at defining and implementing projects within the field of youth.

The 2007 edition of the University on Youth and Development gathered close to 300 representatives of youth organisations from all over the world, public institutions and members of civil society working in youth issues globally. This event was also a key opportunity to empower youth multipliers and to elaborate action-based policies on Youth and Global Cooperation.

NEW "DOCUMENTS" PAGE ON THE AVSO WEBSITE

When we launched the new AVSO website in 2006 (which by now has 200 visitors daily) we decided to keep the number of pages to a minimum in order to be able to up-date all the pages regularly and make it easier to navigate. However we now added a new page, where we will put documents of general interest concerning voluntary service. We will publish there previous editions of our newsletter, our policy contributions, like the statement to the July meeting of the European Parliament Interest Group on Volunteering.

Our members are encouraged to send us any documents, reports they would like to share with the voluntary service sector and colleagues. We also try to collect the most relevant documents and information from the European Commission, such as the Inclusion Strategy of the Youth in Action programme or as well two very recent documents about the state of implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people.

Comments, suggestions are welcome, also if you think we left a document out, please send it to us or let us know. Also, please check the page regularly as we just started filling it up with useful and interesting documents.

To go to the DOCUMENTS page go to VOLUNTARY SERVICE on the AVSO website, and you will find the DOCUMENTS page there, or go directly to: http://www.avso.org/voluntary/voluntary_documents.html

COULD WE REALLY MEASURE VOLUNTEERING?

In October 2007 AVSO started cooperation with the Johns Hopkins University to promote their excellent work jointly with the United Nations. The advocacy campaign comprises of a number of stages, which involves direct awareness rising at the European institutions and would culminate in a conference in the spring 2008 in Brussels, the date will be confirmed later.

At the core of this cooperation is the ***UN Handbook on Nonprofit Institutions in the System of National Accounts (NPI Handbook)*** which was developed in cooperation between the Center for Civil Society Studies of the Johns Hopkins University and the United Nations Statistics Division. Under the leadership of Dr. Lester Salamon they developed a procedure to correct the currently used methodology to count the third or not for profit sector (NGOs) in the system of national account (SNA). As a result, the non-profit organisations are misallocated and subsequently hidden from statistical view. Further, many others that are contributing to the economy are simply not captured at all, further distorting the figures. The misconception, that we live in a welfare Europe and that the third sector is so small it is not worth counting is slowly being challenged. Initial findings show, that for example in the Netherlands, non-profit operating expenditures totals more than \$60.4 Billion, or 15.3 % of GDP, or Italy has more than 1 million full time equivalent non-profit jobs, nearly half of which are composed of volunteer workers. Spain's non-profit workforce represents at least 6.8 % of the economically active population. In Norway, non-profit employment represents 10% of non-agricultural employment. Research shows that the non-profit sector is in fact a major economic force, and ultimately involves millions of volunteers, who due to the same issue are not counted. Through the accurate measuring of the third and volunteer involving sector we could also have a much clearer picture of the number of volunteers and the economic value of volunteering, which in consequence would make our job – lobbying – a lot easier as well as reaching one of our mission objectives, achieving recognition for the volunteer effort. 30 countries all over the world have signed up to conduct the satellite account exercise but so far in Europe it is only Belgium who has committed to regular up-dates. However the Canadian findings show remarkable results, something that we would also most likely find in Europe, concerning the contribution of the non-profit sector to the GDP.

If you got interested, please find below some links to some interesting documents on the subject:

- NPI Handbook Brochure and Fact Sheet: <http://www.jhu.edu/ccss/unhandbook/> , then click on documents by that name at the top of the page
- Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering: Initial Findings from the Implementation of the UN Handbook on Nonprofit Institutions http://www.jhu.edu/~ccss/publications/pdf/Measuring_Civil_Society.pdf
- Global Civil Society: An Overview <http://www.jhu.edu/~ccss/publications/pdf/globalciv.pdf>

AVSO is encouraging its members to lobby their national governments and statistical offices to adopt the Handbook procedure and prepare their satellite accounts. It is not a costly exercise, since the statistical offices are already staffed and have the necessary infrastructure; it is more like a change of point of view. If you are interested in the campaign and want to join us, e-mail us at agnes@avso.org, and we will get in touch with you with some lobby guidelines and documents.

EP INTEREST GROUP ON VOLUNTEERING

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) Marian Harkin and Gisela Kallenbach initiated an Interest Group on Volunteering aimed at other MEPs to discuss issues around volunteering. AVSO was already invited to the previous meeting in July 2007, and the next meeting will be on the 13th November in Strasbourg, and aims at discussing an EU Roadmap for volunteering. We at AVSO have been busy motivating MEPs to participate at the next meeting, and for this we organised a briefing to the MEPs and their assistants in the beginning of November to explain what volunteering and voluntary service is about, and why it is so important that the European Parliament gets involved in the issues such as legal status for volunteers, removing legislative obstacles faced by volunteers and in general creating a favourable European environment for volunteering.

We hope that there will be many MEPs interested in the meeting, and we will for fact maintain a reinforced lobbying work in the European Parliament. After all, 100 million European citizens volunteer more or less regularly and this alone should convince members that they cannot ignore the issue. In the next AVSO Newsletter we will report about the Interest Group meeting.

MEMBER'S CORNER

AVSO GENERAL ASSEMBLY 19TH-20TH NOVEMBER 2007:

The General Assembly reunites the members of AVSO in Brussels for a 2 day meeting. The General Assembly is the forum, where the members validate the work of AVSO and express their opinion. They will vote on the closing of the books and the draft budget and ratify the new members, by now three organisations formalized their applications for the year 2007: PRAXIS (Greece); NOBORDERS (The Netherlands); LEGAMBIENTE (Italy).

The GA will take place next 19th and 20th November in Brussels. The Full Members organisation will gather together in order to prepare the working plan for the Year 2008 and they will conduct an exercise of the organisation development plan for AVSO. During the Brainstorming session different roles for members organisations will be discussed.

This GA will be extremely important in the future of the organisation. Member organisation represented by a full Member can attend as well. You should communicate to your full Member and to the AVSO's Secretariat. Remember that you don't have a right to vote.

Candidates Organisation to join AVSO must finish their applications at the very latest by the end of October. In order to formalise the Membership request, you need:

- Two letters of recommendations of two AVSO full Members.
- Fill the AVSO joining application.

For any other information and the necessary documents for completing the joining process, please do not hesitate to contact to Helena Ruiz Fabra at helena@avso.org

BRIEFING

EU expects all western Balkan countries by the end of 2008 to have signed initial deals, first action before eventual entry into the 27-member Bloc. Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn said Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia were on course to fulfil all EU conditions. But Turkey was urged to improve freedom of expression and minority rights. Drafts of the stabilisation and Association agreements, regarded as the first step towards full EU membership were initialled in Brussels last 7th November.

European Qualifications Framework. Last 25th October the European parliament voted in favour of adopting the Recommendation on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning. The EQF was proposed by the Commission last 2006. It will act as a comparison of qualifications in order to support mobility and lifelong learning. The EQF encompasses general and adult education, vocational education and training, as well as higher education.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html

EU-Canada towards increasing cooperation in youth, higher education and training. The commission in cooperation with the Canadian authorities launched from October 11 new projects in order to promote exchanges of higher education and training institutions.

More about the EU-Canada programme:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/eu-canada/index_en.html

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/extcoop/canada/index_en.htm

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/lld/lssd/iam/european/purpose.shtml>

CALL FOR PROPOSALS AND TENDERS

Citizenship - Connecting people throughout Europe. Call for proposals EACEA 30/07: "Structural support for European public policy research organisations and for civil society organisations at European level" 2008-2009. Deadline: 23rd November. Operating grant for organisations with Interest fro the European Integration. It has been established a multiannual grant for the period 2008-2009 for organisations established in 12 European Countries and a Annual approach for organisations established at least in 8 European Countries. More Information and documents at:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/action2/call3007/index_en.htm

Open call for tenders - Reference No EACEA/2007/15 Feasibility study on collection of data on socio-economic background of learners. Deadline: 26/11/2007. EACEA wishes to conclude a service contract for a Feasibility study on collection of data on socio-economic background of learners. More Information: EACEA-TENDERS@ec.europa.eu

First LIFE+ call for proposals: final application package now available. The deadline for the submission of proposals to the Member States is 30 November 2007. The final LIFE+ application package is now available. A total amount of €187 million is available for this first call for proposals. Deadline for applications 30th November. More Information: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus.htm#First>