

Editorial

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

During the last month of September, the AVSO secretariat was working very hard on the "Hand in Hand" seminar on reinforced mentorship, that took place in Rome, the networking visit to Paris, the development of different project applications and getting back on Track with administrative and staff issues after the summer break. This way the newsletter is a bit delayed, but we will try to catch up during October.

We would like as well to remind you that if you are preparing the AVSO application for joining the Network, please be sure that it reach us at the very latest by the end of October.

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

Enjoy the newsletter,

The AVSO team

News from Europe

IMPORTANT INFORMATION on the final phases of the selection process: Round 2 of the Youth in Action Programme- Published by the EACEA on the 17th September 2007.

"The evaluation of projects for the Round 2 (Deadline 1 June 2007) of the Youth in Action Programme has been finalised by the Executive Agency. However, as the selection decisions will only be taken after consulting the Member States and the European Parliament, the final decisions on the selection results are still under way. Advance information on the lists of projects selected for funding will be published on this site as soon as the European Parliament has given its approval to the process. Please consult the EACEA website regularly on the progress in finalising the selection decisions. In the meantime, please do not contact the services of the Executive Agency / Youth Unit, as it is not possible to provide any further information at this stage".

HEARING – FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS 18TH OCTOBER.

The hearing is organised by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament and it is perhaps of interest to your organisations. They will be pleased to hear your thoughts on these reports: Mr. Giusto Catania is preparing a report on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union 2004-2007 and Mr. Michael Cashman is preparing an opinion on the draft Multi-annual Framework (MAF) of the Fundamental Rights Agency. The two Rapporteurs would like to hear the views of NGOs and with this in mind

would like to organise a meeting in Brussels on 18th October at 9 a.m. devoted exclusively to NGOs.. Unfortunately, the European Parliament will not be able to cover travel costs or any other expenses. The meeting will be divided into two parts, one part dedicated to each report. The rapporteurs will be there to listen to you views and ideas rather than to present their opinions. The time For your presentations will be divided on the basis of requests which we receive from participants. Each panel will last for around 45-60 minutes. We will provide interpretation EN/FR/IT.

We ask you for your comments to the two simple questions:

* what, in your opinion, should be the structure and content of the report on the situation of fundamental rights?

* What changes/improvements would you suggest to the Commission's MAF, bearing in mind the scope as provided in the regulation creating the Agency? Please send a confirmation of your participation before 15th October and request for the floor before the 11th. We will also welcome your written contributions if you would wish to send them to us. Please send your replies to LIBE Secretariat: Marie.DEROZIER@europarl.europa.eu and Maria.LAZAROVA@europarl.europa.eu.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE SEMINAR IN INTERCULTURAL LEARNING.

The Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe will be organising a seminar on the current place and role of intercultural learning in European youth work. The seminar aims to discuss the role of intercultural learning theory and practice in European youth work and its role in the youth policy and programme of the Council of Europe and will take place at the European Youth Centre Budapest on 28 and 29 November.

<http://www.coe.int/youth>

Brussels, 05 September 2007. Commission wants to involve young people better in society European Commission press release.

As Europe's population grows older faster and the pool of young workers shrinks, the EU will rely more and more on its younger generation. According to a Commission analysis presented today, young people are often insufficiently prepared to take on this responsibility. One in six young Europeans still leaves school early and 4.6 million 15-24 year-olds are unemployed. The document highlights the need, at EU and national level, to invest more and earlier in youth education and health and to improve transitions from education into work. It also stresses the importance of involving young people more in civic life, as well as in society as a whole.

"As millions of young Europeans return to education at the start of the new academic year, we must redouble our efforts to create better conditions for young people to develop their skills and participate more actively in society. Young people must feel they have a genuine stake in society," said Ján Figel', EU Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth.

Vladimír Špidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities said: "We need to address the paradoxical situation where the EU has labour shortages on the one hand and too many young people unemployed on the other – twice the overall EU unemployment rate." He added, "we need to give more attention to creating an inclusive society in which no child and young person is left behind."

The challenges young people face when growing up has become more complex

than those faced by their parents' generation. The transitions from school into a job are complicated. Half of today's jobs require high level qualifications and others demand much more varied skills than in the past. Around a quarter of European youngsters do not have the skills and abilities needed to join the labour market. In many Member States, one in three young people still remain jobless a year after leaving education.

Education and job prospects need to be improved. At the same time, volunteering activities are important in getting young people on board to play an active part in society. Better cooperation and the exchange of good practice can help to develop such activities. A recent Eurobarometer survey showed that 74% of young people believe that volunteer programmes are a good way to increase their participation in society.

The Commission today underlined, in particular, the need to invest more, and as early as possible, in young people - not only in financial terms but also in political and social terms, through families, NGOs, teachers and employers. Developing cross-cutting youth strategies must be a priority - at both EU and national level - covering a broad range of policy areas like education, employment, health, enterprise, culture, youth and sports. The Commission also called on Member States to step up efforts by:

- Reducing early school leaving and providing more early school education – starting with children in disadvantaged areas and developing accompanying measures to prevent early school leaving;
- Addressing youth issues in the EU's Growth and Jobs strategy through "flexicurity" strategies that focus on youth improving newcomers' prospects in the labour market;
- Creating better links between business and education and improving mobility.

In this spirit, the launch of the Commission's pilot initiative "Your First Job Abroad" to promote the mobility of workers in the EU will be part of 2007 the EU Job Days;

- Involving young people themselves in decision-making and in the evaluation of youth-oriented policies by strengthening existing partnership between young people, their organisations and the EU institutions. This could be expressed and confirmed in the form of a declaration by the EU and Member States to develop better opportunities for young people with a commitment from young people to play an active part.

The Communication contains several other concrete proposals:

- EU report on youth to be prepared every three years with the participation of young people. It would describe and analyse the situation of young people in Europe, develop greater understanding of the issues, and intensify transversal cooperation
- Initiative for a European quality charter on internships in 2008, to promote internships and combat abuse.
- New Health strategy which supports tailored actions for young people, currently under preparation
- Consultation and impact assessment on voluntary activities, to prepare a further initiative aimed at lifting obstacles and at better recognition of skills acquired through volunteering.
- Analysis of national practices regarding access of young people to culture, with a view to facilitating such access.

The Communication is accompanied by two papers from the Commission on youth employment and on voluntary activities of young people. The employment paper

provides for the first time an analysis of the employment situation of young people 15 to 30 in the EU-27 and includes a detailed statistical annex. The second report is an analytical overview of national policies on youth voluntary activities based on reports from Member States.

For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/youth/>

Background: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_strategy

Thematic Study on Policy Measures concerning disadvantaged youth:
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/publications/publication_en.cfm?id=68

Brussels, 27 September 2007. Make it easier for adults to learn! The Commission calls on Member States to implement the Action Plan on Adult Learning. European Commission Press release.

The European Commission adopted on the 27th September a Communication calling on the Member States to work together and support the EU's Action Plan on Adult Learning. The Action Plan aims to help remove the barriers that prevent adults from engaging in learning activities, and to improve the quality and efficiency of the adult learning sector. It complements this with a call to ensure adequate levels of investment in, and better monitoring of, the adult learning sector. European Commissioner for Education, Training, Youth and Culture, Ján Figel', explained the initiative: "We live in an increasingly knowledge-based society with an aging population and a more intensely competitive global economy. It is therefore vitally important that adults continue to learn, to keep up and to adapt to change. Whether adults find themselves needing to up-skill or re-skill, the Member States must work to make adult learning as easy and accessible as possible. This is precisely what the Commission's Action Plan on Adult Learning aims to do, and today we are calling on Member States to redouble their efforts to implement the Action Plan."

The Action Plan is the follow-up of the Commission's earlier Communication on the same subject, in October 2006: It is never too late to learn. The main thrust is to help build an efficient adult learning system throughout Europe. This involves improving the adult learning sector's governance structure, and the quality, efficiency and accountability of its systems of delivery for learning activities, learning support and the recognition of learning outcomes. In the present Communication, the Commission is inviting Member States to increase their involvement in the Action Plan through the following actions:

1. Analyse effects of reforms in other educational sectors on adult learning. Most Member States are developing a National Qualification Framework that is linked to the forthcoming European Qualifications Framework. The process includes discussions on credit transfer. Since these developments are focussed on how to facilitate access to, progress in, and transfer between learning activities, they are potentially important for opening up qualification systems to adults.
2. Improve the quality of provision. Quality assurance forms an important part of the reforms in education and training. The quality of provision is affected by policy, resources, infrastructure and a host of other factors, but the key factor is the quality of the staff involved in delivering learning

activities. So far, in many Member States little attention has been paid to the training (initial and continuing), status and payment of teaching staff in the adult learning sector.

3. Increase the possibilities to achieve at least one higher-level qualification. Demographic projections for Europe emphasise the importance of investing in the human and social capital of adult learners, since the working population is continually aging. However, it is not enough to simply attract people into adult education and training. The opportunity for them to progress and to raise their qualification levels must be real and must allow them to better integrate in all spheres of life.
4. Speed up the process of assessing and recognizing non-formal and informal learning for disadvantaged groups. The assessment and recognition of skills and social competences, regardless of where and how they are gained, are especially important for the disadvantaged, who do not have basic qualifications, in order to facilitate their integration in society. It is important for all stakeholders (employers, governments, individuals etc.) that this is done, because there is evidence that recognizing skills acquired non-formally and informally could lead to important savings in time and money.
5. Improve the monitoring of the adult learning sector. There is an urgent need for a common language to overcome the misunderstandings and the lack of comparable data in the sector. For a regular update (on a two-yearly basis) of the developments in the sector, a minimum set of core data is required.

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

AVSO this Month

Final Document: Expert seminar on exchange of information and best practice in working with the EU Youth Programme, 3 - 6 July 2007, Brussels, Belgium

The new Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013 is a very important financial instrument for the many organisations involved in the youth field. AVSO planned a Seminar in Brussels to provide the organisations with a platform for discussion about the challenges of the new Youth in Action 2007 – 2013 programme. This Seminar gave to the participants the opportunity not only to exchange doubts and good practices in the implementation of projects in the frame of the new Youth in Action Programme (especially Action 1 and 2) but also to benefit of the presence of staff members of the EACEA (Henar Conde), of the Youth National Agencies (Marie H el ene Cotte – French NA and Andrew Hurley – UK NA), of the SALTO RC Inclusion (Ann Hendriks) and of the European Commission DG EAC (Arnaud Dupont and Peggy Gen eve – Youth Unit and Jacob Kornbeck – Sport Unit) directly involved in the new Youth in Action Programme.

The main objectives were to give the participants the chance to clarify their doubts on the implementation of the projects and to provide the DG EAC and the EACEA with a snapshot of the first half-year implementation of the new Youth

Programme at grassroots level. This project corresponded to the aim of AVSO to improve youth policies and to organize more specialized expert seminars, trying to improve the quality of the voluntary service sector. As a first outcome of the Seminar we collected the participants needs, doubts and suggestions about the new Programme in a document that we called the "Participants' wish list" that you can find here together with the list of the organisations that took part to the Seminar.

A lot of hot topics have been discussed, but the participants focused on a few ones.

Firstly the application forms that in spite of the Commission's declared effort of simplification are still considered too complicated and time-consuming (especially for the small organisations). Regarding the EVS forms it has been said that they are too detailed and this limits the flexibility of the project, above all the fact that the sending organisation has to be a partner organisation limits in the choice of the volunteer.

Secondly, the Activity agreement, a "new entry" in the EVS application form, that potentially could be a good tool to formalise the partnerships (among the send and host organisations and the volunteers) and safeguard the organisations, but apparently at the moment it's only creating a lot of problems, mostly to the organisations in those countries where the National Agencies didn't provide templates.

Another major topic was the role of the National Agencies: merely administrative or also supporting? The participants were disappointed in realizing that there is a lack of coordination between the NAs and that each NA interprets the users Guide in a different way generating confusion among the organisations.

These are just a few of the many points tackled during the seminar, as you will notice reading the "Participants' wish list". This list didn't mean to be a collection of complaints, but rather an attempt to find common solutions to common problems together with the institutions directly involved in the implementation of the new programme. The "Participants' wish list" and the Seminar has been thought as a first step in the process of making heard at EU level the voice of the organisations working at grass-root level. We have already presented the list to Mr. Mastrominas, Deputy Head of unit of the Youth programme and to some National Agencies and we intend to spread it further among other relevant stakeholders, so if you want to contribute to the debate with your opinions, suggestions and experience on the new Youth in Action programme, we will more than happy to listen to your voice!

"Hand in Hand" - reinforced Mentorship in voluntary service projects-

The capacity building seminar "Hand in Hand" on reinforced mentorship took place last 25th -28th September in Rome. The Training was attended by 30 organisations interested in developing and improving the mentorship schemes, some of them even to start from scratch. The involvement of Andy Bevan from ICP Partneriaeth and James Cathcart from the Prince's Trust brought the opportunity to the participants to reflect about the different roles of the Mentors, how to develop a mentoring scheme and how to put it into concrete measures regarding EVS. The Training is a milestone at the Inclusion strategy of the European Commission and would have continuity within AVSO's work, our

ongoing priority of including young disadvantaged people in voluntary service projects. At the moment a final document in the form of a Toolkit is being developed by the AVSO secretariat. Further information and materials are coming soon in the Documents section at the AVSO Website.

Member's NEWS

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, for 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 member organisations will gather together in order to prepare the working plan for the Year 2008 and they will validate the strategic plan that the Board of directors together with the secretariat has developed during an organisational development workshop. During the Brainstorming sessions different roles for member organisations will be discussed.

Candidate Organisations interested in joining 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 joint 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

Brussels, 19 September 2007 Commissioner Špidla to address youth workers' conference at Committee of the Regions (CoR)

The conference, entitled 'Young employees in Europe: This is how we want to work', took place at the Brussels headquarters of the Committee of Regions (CoR) on 21 September and the Association of Christian Workers' Organisations (ACW) on 22 September. The event was opened by Giovanni GUT, leader of the youth section for the Movement for Christian Liberation, Luc VAN DEN BRANDE, First Vice-President of the CoR (BE/EPP), and Raf CHANTERIE, President of EZA. A series of short presentations about the situation of young employees in Europe were followed by an address from Mr. Mann, Vice-Chairman of the Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. In the afternoon, Commissioner Špidla moderated a question and answer session about European policies towards young workers.

Brussels, 19 September 2007, Active European citizenship: the Commission awards the 2007 Golden Stars 10 projects have been selected to each receive a Golden Star, a recognition of the active participation and the

citizen-centred efforts, demonstrated in such diverse projects as those seeking to accommodate the intercultural dialogue between different peoples or others that offer learning opportunities and awareness-raising on European integration issues. The awards ceremony will take place in Brussels early November. The awards are delivered within the framework of the "Europe for Citizens" programme, a new programme that responds to the need of enhancing citizen participation in the construction of Europe. The awarded projects seek to represent the best efforts in the field while at the same time their visibility will support and strengthen the thematic approach of the new programme.

More information:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1359&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Call for proposals and tenders.

Youth in Action Programme. Action 4.1. Support for bodies active at European level in the field of youth

Deadline: 31 October 2007. This call for proposals concerns Action 4.1. of the Youth in Action Programme and its purpose is to provide support for the permanent activities of bodies active at European level in the field of youth and pursuing an aim which is of general European interest. These activities must help encourage young people to participate as citizens in public life, in society and in the development and implementation of European cooperation actions in the broadly defined field of youth. This call for proposals corresponds to the grants to be awarded for 2008.

It provides for two types of agreement:

- Partnership framework agreement: bodies that wish to enter into long-term cooperation with the Agency are asked to file an application for a three-year partnership framework agreement.
- Annual operating agreement: those bodies that prefer not to commit themselves in the long term under a partnership agreement may apply for an annual operating grant.