



30
YEARS
OF

SU



DEAR READER,

30 Years ago, in 1988, the Summer University Project was established, bearing in mind one of AEGEE's major goals – the promotion of European Integration. And not only that. When I first heard about the Summer University Project and was about to make my first personal encounter with it, I was often told that “it is an outstanding experience” in which you will get to know new friends, new cultures, broaden your horizon while even developing yourself”. By far something different than a normal summer vacation. And after I experienced this in 2016 for the first time by myself, I can definitely agree on that. And on much more. Somebody even described the Summer University as a “Mini-Erasmus” when it comes to the amount of new friends, impressions, personal development and challenges that you face and cope with in those few weeks. For 30 Years now, this Project has reached and inspired thousands of young people over many generations. It started in 1988 with only 10 Summer Universities, now 30 years later, we can look back on all its achievements, how young Europeans get inspired year by year with the same goals in mind by realizing the values of a borderless Europe. Because this inspiration is the red line throughout a Summer University: You suddenly have a different perspective on the world and society you live in and the opportunities it offers you, you realize that change and progress is possible and that it affects your own personal life, you discover how and in which way you can contribute to that development, your entire mindset changes and you open up for more and more to discover, to get engaged and payed off in the end.

Being now Project Manager of the Summer University Coordination Team, I can definitely say that I have experienced that on my own but also heard many great stories about the Summer University Project. Only a few of those experiences are gathered in this special anniversary booklet which shows only some of the highlights which the Summer University Project offers to young people and how it contributes to their

personal development as European Citizens. This 30th Anniversary year was of course a special edition of the Summer University Season. Summer Breaks introduced a new format of Summer Universities, five teams of “Adventurers” travelled on different routes through Europe and visited Summer Universities with the task to deliver workshops, collect those special emotions and to bring the anniversary celebration closer to locals, organizer and participants of these particular Summer Universities. With the European Elections coming up next year, three of the teams of Adventurers were part of AEGEE-Europe's *Why European Parliament* (YEP) Project's local action tours. They educated SU participants and locals on the European Institutions and how to make (youth) participation count.

More years and more great stories, inspirations and experiences about intercultural and life-changing adventures for thousands of young people are about to come. But at this point, we should retain what has already been achieved since 1988 and gain valuable insights to what these great stories have to tell.

Christian Seuling
*Project Manager of the Summer University
 Coordination Team (2018-2019) and Member of the
 30th Anniversary Project Team*

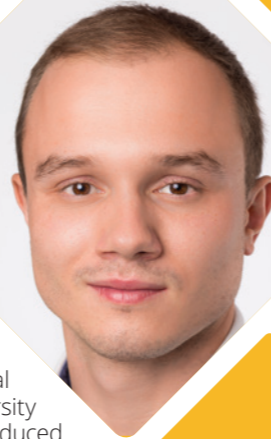


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A group of students is walking away from the camera on a wide, paved pedestrian path. The students are dressed in casual summer attire, many wearing backpacks. The path is flanked by young trees and modern buildings with large windows. The scene is bright and sunny, with shadows cast on the pavement. In the background, a tall, modern building with a unique facade is visible. The overall atmosphere is that of a busy, modern university campus.

SUMMER UNIVERSITY
Now and Then

WHAT DOES SUMMER UNIVERSITY STAND FOR?

SU
IN 2018

NUMBER OF SUs
57

NUMBER OF APPLICANTS
1913

NUMBER OF PLACES
1627

SUMMER UNIVERSITIES - on average two weeks long events taking place each summer in most of the cities where AEGEE is present. A project entirely organized by and for young volunteers.

Aim: Understanding and exploring the multicultural dimension of the European continent, fighting for tolerance and creating open-minded citizens who are not afraid to share their opinion in an open discussion about the future of Europe

Types of Summer Universities:

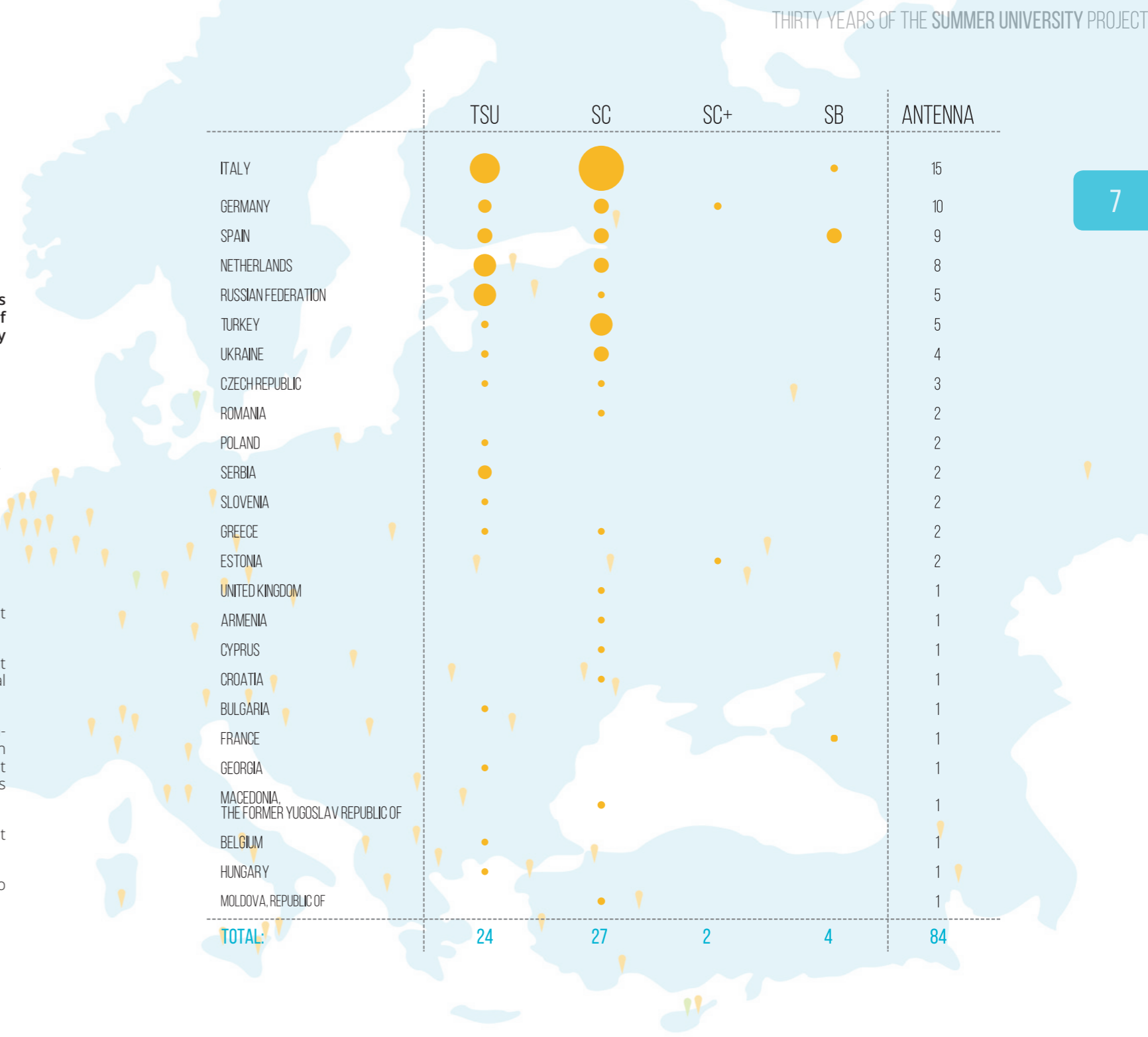
SUMMER COURSE (SC) event on a specific topic with at least 14 hours of tuition per week.

SUMMER COURSE + (SC+) very content-oriented event on a specific topic with at least 20 hours of non-formal education activities.

TRAVELLING SUMMER UNIVERSITY (TSU) event organized by at least 2 AEGEE locals with the main focus on providing a cultural trip; participants are staying in at least 4 different places and are offered at least 10 hours of tuition per week.

SHORT SUMMER COURSE (SSC) shorter event with at least 2 hours of tuition per day.

SUMMER UNIVERSITY PROJECT SCHOOL (SUPS) - How to organize an outstanding SU.



HISTORY TIMELINE



1985, 16 April
700 YOUNG EUROPEANS PARTICIPATE IN PARIS IN A CONFERENCE CALLED EGEЕ AND THE FIRST LOCAL "EGEE" BRANCHES WERE BORN.

1988
EGEE IS NOW CALLED AEGEE, COUNTING 12.000 MEMBERS IN 50 LOCAL BRANCHES

1988
THE BIRTH!
10 LANGUAGE COURSES WITH 320 PLACES ARE ORGANISED. THE FEE IS IN ECUS

1989
THE BERLIN WALL CRUMBLES AND AEGEE OPENS ITS DOORS TO THE EAST: 16 COURSES IN 6 COUNTRIES

1991
THE FIRST SUMMER UNIVERSITIES IN EASTERN EUROPE TAKE PLACE IN BUDAPEST, CLUJ-NAPOCA, MOSKVA, PÉCS, PRAHA AND RIGA. 38 COURSES

1992
THE FIRST 5 TSUS ARE REALITY

1993
68 COURSES!

1994
TYPES: SUMMER UNIVERSITY, SUMMER UNIVERSITY +, TRAVELLING SUMMER UNIVERSITY, SUMMER CAMP

1995
CREATION OF THE SUCT: RESPONSIBLE FOR BOTH SUMMER AND SPRING UNIVERSITIES

1998
10 YEARS OF SUMMER UNIVERSITIES WITH 84 COURSES

1999
NEW APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR THE SU! INSTEAD OF HANDING IN APPLICATIONS ON PAPER, THE LOCALS ARE ASKED TO COLLECT THE APPLICANTS' DATA ON A DATABASE

2000
THE OFFICIAL WEBPAGE HTTP://WWW.AEGEE.ORG/SU IS INTRODUCED. THE FEE IS NOW IN EURO

2002
NEW TYPES: SUMMER COURSE, LANGUAGE COURSE, SUMMER EVENT. INCREASE OF THE FEE

2008
INCREASE OF THE FEE: 70€/WEEK FOR THE COURSE AND 90€/WEEK FOR THE "PLUS". GREEN SUS

2009
TYPES: SC, LC, LC+, TSU, SE

2012
25 YEARS OF THE SU!
TYPES: SUMMER COURSE, SUMMER COURSE +, TRAVELLING SU

2013
SU MAPS: ALL DESTINATIONS AT A GLANCE!

2016
EACH SU HAS A CONTENT MANAGER AND EACH ORGANIZING LOCAL HAS A MAIN RESPONSIBLE

2003
APPLICANTS ARE NOW ASKED TO APPLY THROUGH THE WEBSITE. TSU ORGANISED BY 9 SPANISH ANTENNAE TRAVELLING THROUGH THE IBERIAN PENINSULA

2004
THE SU PROJECT AT ITS PEAK: 96 SUS! SUMMER UNIVERSITY PROJECT SCHOOL (SUPS): THE FIRST ONE TO BE ORGANISED. TYPES: SC, SC+, LC, LC+, TSU, SE

2016
MOBILE VERSION OF THE SU WEBSITE GOES ONLINE. TURKISH SUS HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE ATTEMPTS OF A COUP D'ÉTAT

2017
5 SHORTER SUPS INSTEAD OF 1 LONG ONE. TSU 'ITALIAN GRAND TOUR': 5 ANTENNAE TRAVEL FROM NORTH TO SOUTH ITALY

2006
THE SUMMER UNIVERSITY IS JUST FOR SUMMER: JUNE TO OCTOBER. SU COMES TO THE CAUCASUS REGION!

2018
HAPPY 30TH ANNIVERSARY ADVENTURERS TRAVELLING ON 5 ROUTES #FROMONESUMMERTOANOTHER IN COOPERATION WITH AEGEE-EUROPE'S YEP PROJECT

2018
THE SUMMER BREAK PILOTS ARE INTRODUCED!

2007
20 YEARS OF THE SU: CELEBRATION EVENT IN ISTANBUL

NON SOLO SOLE: THE LONGEST- RUNNING SU

Antonio Castiello, AEGEE-Salerno

30 Years of Summer University Project does also mean 30 Years of Non Solo Sole.

Around 1000 participants, 500 organizers, 120 places visited, 25 different countries, an inestimable number of activities and locals, everything under only one title. Lazy organizers? Lack of creativity? Definitely not!

From the beginning, back in 1989, AEGEE-Salerno has understood the potential and the importance of the SU Project. Year by year, Salerno has followed the growth of an idea and its changes: from the fax to the Internet, from language courses to multicultural activities... For sure, in the South of Italy we love to keep traditions but more than anything, Salerno wanted to leave a mark on the history of this project and to contribute to its development.

It's every year the same, a new team of organizers receives from the previous one a painting started in 1989. The drawing is always the amazing Province of Salerno and not even the colours have changed: red as the passion that we put, green as our mountains, purple as our wine, yellow as the sun and blue as our sea. Many hands have grabbed the brushes and painted different perspectives in order to create a collective masterpiece.

What does *Non Solo Sole* mean? Probably 90% of the Italian speakers would say *Not Only Sun* and it makes sense since this SU offers, besides an average temperature of 30°C, a lot of different activities such as trekking, workshops, Italian language lessons... By the way, this was what most of AEGEE-Salerno's members

believed too, until the last night of the *Non Solo Sole XXX Edition*. On that occasion, Fabrizio Moscati, the founder of AEGEE-Salerno, explained the origins of the famous title. The word *Sole*, usually during the last years considered as *Sôle* (Sun) should be pronounced *Sòle* which in some dialects means *swindles*.

Therefore, everything started as a sort of joke by a group of friends. The aim was to show a different vision of the South of Italy and its people, usually portrayed as dangerous and unreliable. Literally *Not Only Swindles*.

Nowadays, the Summer University in Salerno is a family affair. Each edition has its great returns: members abroad, busy people and hard workers. *Non Solo Sole* has no excuse. Especially during the dinners, when the organizers use to sort large portions of pasta, the accommodation calls back various characters of our story. Participants, organizers, old members, newbies, someone that came just to say hello but in the end he/she will stay all night long, friends, friends of friends... Everybody is carried by a

previous editions, old application letters (real letters) and the first program ever of our SU. Actually, this album is full of messages by old participants and some tears fall whenever we open it.

Anyhow, you understand how much the Summer University Project influenced positively your life, when the person who started the painting tells you stories with the same smile that you have 30 years later.

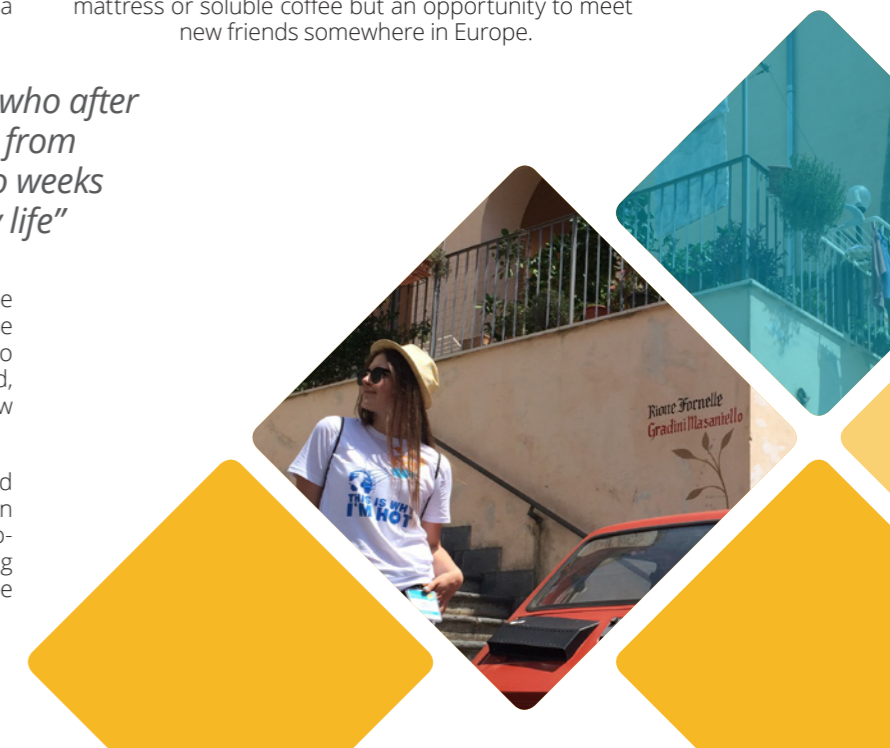
The aim was to show a different vision of the South of Italy

This is what keeps this project alive, in Salerno and all over the network. The warmed heart of an organizer who after months and months of work hears from someone he has just known for two weeks "Thanks for the best summer of my life". The melancholy and the enthusiasm of a participant in the end of a Summer University, realizing that tomorrow there will be no air mattress or soluble coffee but an opportunity to meet new friends somewhere in Europe.

The warmed heart of an organizer who after months and months of work hears from someone he has just known for two weeks "Thanks for the best summer of my life"

particular feeling of familiarity that has grown over the years and has linked different generations. Imagine coming back to the small village where you used to go for holidays with your family when you were a child, and you find out that this place is still yours even if new people came along. That small village is *Non Solo Sole*.

Non Solo Sole XXX Edition - the Show mUst go on had its own themes such as the arts and the self-expression but at the same time, it paid tribute to all the memories collected in those years. During the Fair of Spring Agora Krakow 2018, we showed a photo album of all the



10 YEARS OF THE DREAM

Ksenia Lupanova and Ekaterina Nemova, AEGEE-Moskva

30 years of the Summer University project happens to be not the only anniversary in 2018. This summer Moscow gathered organizers, participants, friends, partners and families to celebrate 10 years of Transsiberian DREAM Travelling Summer University.

Transsiberian DREAM is a 14-21 day long journey, organized by AEGEEans, which follows the famous Transsiberian Railway, the longest railway line in the world, typically starting from Moscow and finishing in Mongolia, Beijing or Vladivostok. This trip is a must-have on many travellers' bucket lists — the chance to travel across the largest country on Earth, on a stereotype-breaking adventure. AEGEE members, always eager to jump on opportunities, have never been an exception.

If you are joining the DREAM, you should live the DREAM

Have you ever wondered how it all started?

The first edition of Transsiberian DREAM was organized in 2009 by AEGEE-Sankt-Petersburg in cooperation with AEGEE-Moskva. From the cultural capital participants travelled to the magnificent Baikal Lake. DREAM became true for the first time.

It was not long before the next editions were out of question. The Network wanted to live the DREAM! Over the years many locals took part in organizing it. In 10 years places were offered to 300 participants and it took nearly 200 people in the making! The project went through drastic changes over the course of a decade.

For organizers the main goal never changed: to make Transsiberian DREAM the life-changing experience people were seeking. Generations of locals

joined forces and created the network or Transsiberian organizers, in order to ensure the growth, knowledge transfer and perfecting the programme. A new HR strategy was applied around 2014, which made the organizers' positions prestigious. Until now there has always been a competition for every position in the team which is selected by a special commission. The high quality bar of the project never shattered our courage and we were free to plan the route, offer new destinations and daring activities.

The next step was to build a strong focus on thematic content. History and local culture has always been a focal one for us, so we pushed in that way with more contentful activities, by involving experienced trainers and gamifying the learning ways! It allowed us to provide participants with entertaining flow and to fulfill the goal of showing them real culture! From local food tasting to Russian language workshops, traditional dances and interactive quests, altogether helping to unfold the depth of different regions we cross on a journey. Once this was a smooth and well-prepared part, we aimed even higher.

We started the preparations for the triumphant journey of this year's Transsiberian DREAM vol.10 right after the 9th edition was over: we started promotion for the event, made a new merchandise and even filmed a trailer.

The thematic category of "Green SU" was added to the topic thanks to the successful cooperation with AEGEE-Europe's Europe on Track project whose 2018 topic was Sustainability and Climate Change! We never used plastic during the event, provided our participants



with reusable cups, bottles and cutlery and separated and recycled the waste throughout the whole journey. We even managed to make our trip carbon neutral by planting 100 trees!

Multiple workshops, lectures and interactive sessions took place all over Russia: from parks in Moscow to the shores of Baikal Lake and trains' compartments.

This year we celebrate the anniversary of our beloved SU project and felt that the 10th edition of Transsiberian DREAM should destroy all the limits which are yet left and go even bigger than earlier. The previous editions always finished in the heart of Siberia, at the Baikal Lake, but the new coordinator came up with an idea of following the original route, covering 9.288 kilometers from the West to the East of Russia! Go 3.965 km further, extending the amount of days to 3 weeks and the route further to Vladivostok, the extreme South of the Russian Far East? Well, the DREAM was never too big for us.

This year we assembled the biggest team organizing it ever: We were proud to receive 53 application in total to be part of the team and chose 7 core-team members and 8 organizers from different countries and locals. All of the team gathered 4 times for knowledge transfers and intense team-buildings in different cities, as we strongly believe that this part of the organizing process is the most important one.

"I am strongly convinced that it changed me from the inside. I am not the same person I was a month ago and I am actually happy about it" (Luca, Transsiberian DREAM vol.10)

More than 200 hours on the train, sunsets in the Kremlin and sunrises on Baikal Lake, fireworks, night swimming in the lake, shaman dancing, people running after the train in every city, watching shooting stars and the tears and smiles at the moment you get out of the train in Vladivostok - things giving you goosebumps even many months after it all happened, but the experience which is difficult to explain. You can only live it.

On our T-shirt we put the slogan "I'll quit only when I Transsib", as we have heard this many times from AEGEEans. Indeed, many of the Transsiberian DREAM participants are older, more experienced members, who have seen a lot both in- and outside of AEGEE and leave this challenging journey as the cherry on the top, their last event before leaving this organization. But this is not the rule. The rule is that you can't leave AEGEE before doing it. It doesn't matter whether it is your last or first event.

During this trip you share so many things and moments that you become incredibly close with these people. Most of them continue to keep in touch even years after and make countless reunions all over the world. You feel some sort of a special connection even with the people from different editions: once you got Transsibed you join the Transsib family. It's not just the project, but one of the wildest and most challenging DREAMs of the passionate organizers and unique participants, which has become true for 10 years in a row, thanks to the Summer University Project. Never stop DREAMing BIG!

"People that come to the Transsiberian Dream should be prepared for things that they have never experienced before. Not in the sense that it will somehow destroy you, but for sure it will change your life. So be prepared for a change. Cause that's the most important thing. If you are joining the DREAM, you should live the DREAM" (Antonin, Transsiberian DREAM vol.9).

HOW TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Michele Turati, Les Anciens

Now, here's the first question to ask if we want to have a look at the present with an eye on the past: what has changed in the last 30 years? A lot, historically, politically, economically and socially. How did those change impact the Summer University project? A lot, again, and all of those have changed the way AEGEE organizes the SU. When the project started, and you can find a brief history in this booklet, it was meant as an innovative tool to learn something new while connecting European youth in a meaningful way, by giving opportunities to create networks abroad. Admittedly, when the project started back in 1988, the means of communication were far different than what we can use now. There was no Facebook for online interaction and most of the information were shared by mail. There were no low-cost air carriers and hitch-hiking together with interrail passes were the easiest way to move across the continent.

There are plenty of emotions going around, that's for sure

There were visa applications to be requested in most of the cases, passport controls between countries, scepticism when landing abroad.

There are plenty of emotions going around, that's for sure. Most of the participants and the organizers of each SU have plenty of stories to tell, anecdotes and facts. It's no secret, when groups of people of the same age meet together for two or three weeks, a lot of fun happens, and people risk being overwhelmed by emotions. The purpose of this booklet is to celebrate 30 years of SU, it's inevitable that many of the articles focus on emotions. This is the reason why I would like to look back with a more critical eye.

There is one important word that could describe this project that has been running for 30 years: manage-

ment. The SU is a centrally coordinate project run by a core team in charge of everything that can be controlled on central level, from applications to communication.

30 years of Summer Universities means that every year from 1988 this programme gave the opportunity to thousands of young people to interact with each other. Often, we limit the understanding of the number of people impacted by the SU project to the number of participants, but this is misleading. Each of the tens of SU organized each year has an entire staff who work together for the organization, a preparation that begins months in advance. The people behind are the key to the SU success, a mix of experienced members who have supported the organization the previous year, together with a group of volunteers who might lack experience but compensate it with enthusiasm. Coordinating such a group, keeping the motivation high each year is one of the main success of the management, or the SU won't happen.

This is good on multiple levels: it makes the SU sustainable through the years, guaranteeing continuity in the programme, it empowers new generations of volunteers, it stimulates the maintenance of networks on local and international levels. When it comes to leaving the organization, AEGEE is no different from other associations and NGOs with regards to the alumni network; many of the former members have reached a position in life from where they can contribute to AEGEE again after few years of terminating their membership. Among former members of AEGEE we have members of national parliaments, entrepreneurs, lobbyists, local activists, local politicians. The direction we, and I include myself as former member of AEGEE in the decade 2003-2013, have taken in life is often shaped by the experiences lived through the activities organized during a SU: we lived the change, through the three decades, we know what we want to achieve and

most of all we realize that among people from different countries, despite some differences, we are all similar to each other. And this is what being European is about.

And this is what being European is about. It's about being diverse, it's about acknowledging such diversity while being aware of all the things each of us have in common, starting from values and the desire for peace

It's about being diverse, it's about acknowledging such diversity while being aware of all the things each of us have in common, starting from values and the desire for peace.

What is the impact of the SU project, then? Statistically the SU is the main recruitment tool for AEGEE, most of the people who joined AEGEE did so to apply to a SU, so it's safe to say that most of the people who joined AEGEE took part in at least one SU during their (on average) 2 years of membership. I leave the description of the meaning of a SU to my many friends who are also writing their experience to celebrate the 30th anniversary, but the outcome of a SU is a common thread that links us all. It sticks to one's soul and shape the personality in a way that can often change someone's opinion and break stereotypes. Add this to a successful life and there you have it: a lifeline for what we can call "European" people.

This is not the right forum to discuss how Europe works, the pros and cons of the European Union, the achievements and failures of the European project.

Add this to a successful life and there you have it: a lifeline for what we can call "European" people

AEGEE made, makes and hopefully will continue to contribute to shape the values of generations of people from every corner of Europe. For this reason, I would like to thank AEGEE and the creator of the SU project for giving us the opportunity to live an idealistic youth experience, and thanks to the hundreds of SU organizers everywhere and anytime in the last 30 years for allowing each year more people to enjoy a wonderful time in summer, an experience that will kick back in emotions and ideas in all our lives, even many years after living it.



30TH ANNIVERSARY *Celebrations*



30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SUMMER UNIVERSITY PROJECT



SUMMER ADVENTURE: FROM ONE SUMMER TO ANOTHER

5
ROUTES

12
ADVENTURERS

23
SUMMER
UNIVERSITIES

>5.000KM
COVERED

800 AEGEANS
REACHED

30
CITIES

Aim: The Adventurers spent the summer travelling around Europe in order to capture the atmosphere of different SUs and bring the anniversary celebrations to the cities along their routes. Their visits highlighted the achievements of the SU project and its impact on everybody involved.

Trainers carried out workshops on the European Union and the importance of youth participation and activism.

Interviewers got various opinions on the project itself and the role of young people in civil society.

Bloggers made sure the experience of each stop will be immortalized at AEGEE's heritage blog (hosted by ESACH).

Photo- and videographers did their best to capture all those unique moments of the Adventure.



THE SUMMER OF AN ADVENTURER

Marta Łabanowska, AEGEE-Warszawa & Adventurer

2018 is a special year for the Summer University Project. Why? How many student organisations can proudly say that their project has been carried on continuously for 30 years? Definitely not that many. Over the last three decades Europe has changed significantly, and so have the mindsets and the needs of European citizens. Thus, the Summer University Project had to adjust to the changing environment. Although the vast majority of current SUs are not typical language courses, as they used to in 1988, the main concept of a short-term mobility programme which combines cultural exchange and non-formal education remains the same.

So 30 years after the first edition of the project a group of motivated AEGEEans decided to join forces and work together on the celebration of the association's longest lasting project. Is there a better way to do so than to reach the majority of this year's Summer Universities by sending 12 Summer lovers around the continent who do their best to combine the historic, current and future perspective of AEGEE's flagship project? That's how the idea of the Summer Adventure was born. The concept was simple: 12 Adventurers splitted into 5 teams traveling from one Summer University to another and contributing to the 30th anniversary celebrations at each stop. Each of us, Adventurers, had a different role, depending on our skills and experience. We have been either trainers, bloggers and interviewers, video-makers or photographers.

But what have we actually done? Was it just the next travelling experience for us? Well, definitely not! Of course, we did have a lot of fun and gathered lots of great memories, but having a specific role each of us had plenty of responsibilities and tasks to do every day.

Trainers provided workshops either on the history

of the SU Project or on the functioning of the European Institutions. For many participants of Summer Universities we visited, it was the first encounter with AEGEE. They were not totally aware of the historical background of our organization, not to mention the history of the SU project. Thus, we tried to make them aware of the way the SU project has been developing through the past three decades. As mentioned before, numerous aspects have changed, including the application process and the structure of the content part, but regardless whether you look at the Summer University organized in 1990 or 2018, the values shared by the participants are exactly the same. Young people were, are and hopefully still will be interested in taking part in mobility programmes which on one side give them a unique chance to get to know foreign cultures from the locals' perspective and on the other hand develop

I've definitely strengthened my belief that Europe is really beautiful and unique in its diversity

their soft skills through various workshops. Secondly, trainers used non-formal education activities in order to raise the current crucial issues for Europe, youth participation in European as well as local parliamentary elections being one of them. The Summer University Project is also about content, and Adventurers want to show that even if organized by students and volunteers, it can be of high quality. Therefore three out of five routes toured under YEP (*Why European Parliament?*). The idea behind it was to spread awareness about the European Union and the upcoming European Elections. The Summer University Project is not only about discovering new cultures and making new friends, it is also about becoming more active in one's own society.

Participating within a Summer University allows us to become critical citizens.

And don't forget about the other team members - video makers and photographers did their best to capture all important moments of each of the Adventurers' stops as well as cooperated with bloggers. Bloggers apart from writing articles for the European Heritage Blog, were also responsible for making interviews with participants, organizers, AEGEE alumni or even randomly passers-by. Among the questions asked there were both those concerning their opinion on the current structure of the project, the lesson they have learned while organizing a SU or their motivation to apply for short-term mobility programmes like SUs, but also with focus on the future. How do they imagine the project will look like in 30 years? Is it even possible that it will still exist? The answers certainly differed from one another. It should not come as a surprise that after having asked over 100 people involved in the project in different roles, we got a remarkable overview of how the Summer University project is perceived as well as what should be taken into account by future project managers. Let us not forget the questions related to the YEP project that concerned the European Union in general, the knowledge of respondents about it as well as their opinion on it. The answers were quite surprising as we saw that a lot of people didn't really know much about how the EU bubble works. This makes our actions even more meaningful!

The Adventure was really a great experience to all 12 of us. It doesn't really matter whether AEGEEan or not, travelling around Europe for two weeks sounds like a good daydream to all backpackers. But from my personal perspective I would rather describe it as an enjoyable, challenging experience. Literally each stop meant a new challenge. We had no idea what to expect from neither the participants nor the organizers, and the fact that sometimes we joined a SU for its last days, when the group has already developed its own team spirit, made the sociological aspects even more tricky, not to mention the thrill that was accompanying us

whenever we managed to catch our next train in the very last minute. All in all it was one of the most intense experiences of my life, and, I must admit I would do it again. After all, summer is made for adventures and I don't think there is a better way to spend a summer break than combining two extremely important aspects of life - learning and travelling. And what is my lesson from the Adventure? I've definitely strengthened my belief that Europe is really beautiful and unique in its diversity. At that point I'm pretty sure I will never have enough of exploring the rich and diverse cultures that all European countries offer.



YOUTH PARTICIPATION: EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SUS

Victoria Lock, AEGEE-Berlin & Adventurer

It is one thing to spend your Summer travelling from one SUMmer to another - but it was something else to spend your summer doing it in the name of a good cause: Youth Participation.

Martina, Alberto and I, Tori, (the team, who travelled Route 5) spent 2 weeks of our summer spreading the importance of youth participation across the Netherlands, England and Germany - and it will be a journey I will remember forever.

Having experienced a Summer University myself, I know that an SU can become somewhat a small, independent ecosystem. Participants can forget about their lives in the outside world. They spend long summer days, carefree, immersed in foreign lands and cultures, building intense and rich friendships with people from all corners of Europe, people who were strangers a mere few days before. The Summer University experience is unlike anything else in the AEGEE world.

It was exactly this, which we had to be aware of as we arrived in each new location and dove into a new SU ecosystem. As the trainer in the route 5 team, I asked myself: How can we shift participants attention to major

topics such as: the importance of democracy and policy and advocacy, without disrupting the quintessential SU atmosphere. Our answer to this question: Non Formal Education. Done in the right way, Non Formal Education makes learning cohesive and disguisable. Unlike the learning which takes place in formal educational institutions, Non Formal Education provides an environment, in which learning can take any shape or form. Participants ideate, play, act, discuss, dance, innovate, dream, reflect on themselves, our society and the world. Our goal was to shift the European Union and the democratic processes for which it stands, to the forefront of our participants minds. There's no environment more fitting than a Summer University, to make exactly this happen. With such a diverse range of nationalities within the group, participants do not only give thought to their cultural differences, but also spend time reflecting on their similarities and the qualities, which unite them. In AEGEE, we believe we are all European. Being European unites us. I am therefore grateful to have spent my summer, travelling Europe with an incredible, talented team and bringing youth participation to the forefront of young Europeans' minds. In the coming year, with the European Elections, this topic is more important than ever.



3
ROUTES*

15
WORKSHOPS**

Y

The Adventurers held workshops about the functioning of European institutions, participation and democracy. Furthermore, interviews with young people from all over Europe were conducted about elections, youth participation and the understanding of the EU.

Aims: Informing young people about the European Parliament as an institution, the democratic concept for which it stands, its functioning and competences.

Exposing the relevance of the European Parliament in the daily life of young people.

Encouraging young people to be aware and participate in the democratic European life.

Brace yourself for the European Elections in May 2019!

*Route #3 through Spain, Route #4 through Italy, Route #5 through the Netherlands, UK and Germany.

**were part of AEGEE-Europe's Why European Parliament (YEP) project which was co-funded by the European Union.

SUMMER BREAK IN PARIS: AN INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE!

Mounia Bouayad & Lila Quaile, AEGEE-Paris

Last Summer, AEGEE-Paris organised for the first time a Summer Break, the newborn mobility program which was a pilot project of the 30th anniversary of Summer Universities. After the outstanding success of our New Years Eve Event in December 2017, we were surrounded by positive waves and thus the crazy idea of applying for the project and organising this amazing event came to our minds! From Azerbaijan to Spain, stepping by Estonia and Germany, we had 20 wonderful participants that came to France to spend one week discovering two cities: Reims and Paris.

The first stop was in the city of Reims. For 3 days the participants discovered the city and its historic by UNESCO protected monuments during a rainy city tour. Despite harsh weather conditions, the participants had shown real interest in the culture that warmed-up the

From Azerbaijan to Spain, stepping by Estonia and Germany, we had 20 wonderful participants that came to France to spend one week discovering two cities: Reims and Paris



atmosphere. The city of Reims is also called the city of Champagne, because of the internationally renowned high-quality Champagne produced there. Therefore, we organisers, found it important to visit the House of Champagne which is fully related to the culture. We were only two organisers during this first part of the Summer Break but we succeeded in managing the whole group throughout the stay. Reims is a magical city, symbol of *élégance à la française*. Going there was an obvious choice for us, since the subject of our Summer Break was the French royal history and in Reims 90% of French kings and queens were crowned.

Europe is made of people: to understand each other, live with each other and think about a common future, we have to stick together as Europeans

The second stop was of course the city of love, Paris. Besides visiting the historic heart of Paris, the participants discovered French cuisine and French language through some workshops free of all stereotypes. The cultural exchange reaches its apogee in Paris thanks to the multi-ethnicity of the city. Indeed it's a melting pot of histories and cultures where all languages of the world are spoken. We also went to Versailles, royal residence of several French royal families. Versailles is a very tour-

istic place and even though we arrived there around 9:30 in the morning we had to queue for two and a half hours under the sun. We were lucky to have such motivated participants who were extremely patient and didn't mind staying in line for such a long time. We, organisers, did our best to entertained them with team-building exercises and dancing AEGEE's Tunak Tunak in front of dozens of Asian tourists filming us.

The subject of our Summer Break was the French royal history

As organisers, this event was a truly exhausting experience, grateful but exhausting! We were a small team, as mentioned above, only two organisers in Reims and then seven in Paris. We handled the event from the first idea to the last clean-up. But beside the tiredness, the Summer Break was full of joy and cultural exchange with amazing people coming to visit our cities, eager to learn a bit more about our culture and history. This kind of event makes people more open-minded and tolerant towards each other. It fosters relationships among people living in two opposing parts of our continent, makes them aware of our differences but also the values that connect us all.

Summer Breaks, Summer Universities, and short-term mobility programmes, are especially meaningful in the current state of Europe. Europe is made of people: to understand each other, live with each other and think about a common future, we have to stick together as Europeans.

TOWARDS INTERCULTURAL LEARNING AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP FOR ALL

Jasmin Kaiser, 30 Years of Summer University project

Through intercultural exchange and means of non-formal education Summer Universities foster active European Citizenship among young people. Generating learning outcomes has been an underlying principle of the project ever since. Tackling one topic that is of concern for the European youth, such as equal rights or sustainability, through means of non-formal education in a diverse intercultural learning environment, creates the ideal context to enable participants to break down barriers and to self-develop.

In December 2018 the Lifelong Learning Week took place in Brussels. Organized by the Lifelong Learning Platform and among others supported by the Youth Intergroup of the European Parliament, AEGEE as a LLLP member, seized this chance to bring the impact of short-term mobility programmes on young people to the political agenda.

AEGEE as a LLLP member, seized this chance to bring the impact of short-term mobility programmes on young people to the political agenda

On 6th December AEGEE and the European Youth Forum invited decision-makers, stakeholders as well as young volunteers to exchange ideas during the session "Towards intercultural learning and active citizenship for all - The role of short-term mobility and youth organisations". The event aimed at fostering a discussion among organizations that provide educational short-term mobility and the European institutions to

fully acknowledge the impact such programmes have on young people and their development as European

Generating learning outcomes has been an underlying principle of the project ever since

citizens. The diversity among the approximately 25 participants allowed for a rich exchange of best practices and demonstrated how short-term mobility can reach different groups of young people. For instance, YEP local action tours which were part of the 30th anniversary of the Summer University project (see p. 22) reached many young people who are not primarily engaged with EU politics. However, 80% of them said that workshops such as those they experienced at their Summer University increase one's participation in civil society.

During an interactive fishbowl discussion advantages and obstacles for organizers as well as participants of short-term mobility have been raised. These concerned all types of programmes, including the European Parliament's 2018 pilot project DiscoverEU which offers free interrail tickets to 18-years old. The following points have been addressed:

- Mobility needs to be inclusive and offer equal opportunities to all. It needs to be accessible for all young people, regardless of their socio-economic background and those who lack resources must be supported accordingly.

Throughout the discussion it was pointed out that short-term mobility schemes come with great potential to have a life-changing impact on young people involved

- Short-term mobility programmes must be open to all young Europeans, including those of non-EU member states.
- Programmes must be structured and cannot solely rely on informal learning. Participants need some sort of guidance throughout the programme as otherwise (negative) experiences are at danger to be interpreted without any filter. Youth organizations are capable to provide this structure and guidance.
- Civil society organizations should be acknowledged as providers of non-formal education.
- Skills and knowledge acquired as a participant or organizer of short-term mobility projects need to be formally recognized.

Throughout the discussion it was pointed out that short-term mobility schemes come with great potential to have a life-changing impact on young people involved. The difficulty lies in exploiting this potential in the best possible way, in using mobility programmes to foster active European citizenship.

The session at the Lifelong Learning Week 2018 presented a great opportunity for exchange and collaborations between different stakeholders. AEGEE looks forward to keep empowering mobility programmes offered by youth organizations as a place to create open-minded Europeans.

NEXT 30 YEARS OF SUMMER UNIVERSITY: THE FIRST ONE

Marco Daniele, Vice-President & External Relations Director of AEGEE-Europe

30 years ago, Summer Universities were born mostly as language courses. The desire to learn or teach a language is a powerful concept: it's the desire to relate with others, to interact with diversity in a climate of understanding.

Summer University teaches the language of feeling European

In a Europe where it was a lot more difficult to travel, a European Community that was less established, for a less educated generation, AEGEE played the role of bringing the people together at the basis of fruitful communication. We gave young Europeans the chance to learn the basics in order to share opinions, grow friendships, focus on the similarities instead of the differences, to discuss a better Europe.

In 2018, only some of the current Summer Universities are organizing language courses; nonetheless, the programme still strives to ensure the necessary steps the new generations need in order to feel united. Summer University teaches the language of feeling European.

In 30 years of Summer Universities, AEGEE took 150.000 young people living in Europe and turned them into European citizens; and if it's true that the borders of Europe are until where people feel European, we can say we participated in creating Europe as well. All of this was achieved without any major help from the European institutions, but completely based on the work of young volunteers.

In the meanwhile, Summer University makes it possible for thousands of young people to experience cities as true citizens, cities they would never have the chance to visit otherwise, while giving the chance to hundreds of cities to showcase their uniqueness, beauty and opportunities, always being a pioneer in sustainable tourism and educational cultural exchanges.

Summer University is and will be an even more inclusive programme: thanks to its safe learning and experiencing environment, everyone can join and enjoy, regardless of their background.

Summer University also wants to represent more and more the self-development moment of the year for any young person: in between the multitude of activities that our generation is involved in, leisure can't be the only focus of our holidays. Summer Universities are there to help young Europeans to experience something unique while improving their skills, learn about their

Always being a pioneer in sustainable tourism and educational cultural exchanges

passions, and make them meet friends from all over Europe, thanks to non-formal education methodologies.



So, what's the mission of Summer University in the next 30 years? We think that the original objective is more relevant and modern than ever.

Today Europe may be easier to travel or to communicate in, but it is facing more dangerous and urgent challenges than ever before.

Europe is, for the first time so strongly, under the storm of movements whose target isn't redirecting it or even its reshape, but to restrict its experience to national borders. These ideas have the power to get the attention of people who are normally disattached from politics and active citizenship, and to trick them into anti-educative practices and radicalization, xenophobia and hate, intolerance and rage. Until now, traditional European politics are failing in answering to this invasion of a unknown, deluded audience that populists are able to involve in the conversation.

As AEGEE, we can't watch this happening without reacting. Short-term youth mobility programs are, in this sense, relatable to populism: through making a person experience the Summer of his or her life, we educate, we prepare, we grow active European citizens out of young individuals. We know how to react to their techniques, without ever breaking the trust of the people who choose us.

Already this year we are using this friendly approach to get in contact with the most disengaged part of youth for the next crucial point of this possible political crisis, the European elections. With the support of the European Parliament, in the shape of our project YEP 2.0,

We educate, we prepare, we grow active European citizens out of young individuals

we are going to have a special observation mission of AEGEE's Election Observation Project, to let the same young people, who feel disconnected from traditional politics because of a sense of mistrust, be in charge of assuring the existence of democratic practices or, provided this wouldn't be the case, to raise awareness about the lack of transparency in the European elections. We will also have a case study trip in Eastern Europe, to address the similarities and the common values we share with different parts of our continent. Last but not least, we will host the first edition of our festival, YEAH (Young European Activists Hub), one month before the elections, to engage thousands of young people who normally participate in less "political" events than a traditional conference, in order to motivate them to vote and to educate themselves about the political discussion.

So, what's the role of Summer University in this scenario? Summer University needs to continue its mission, with renewed forces, with more support from the people around us, all together: because in order to become an active citizen and to feel European, it takes the summer of your life.



The Content

**BEHIND
SUMMER UNIVERSITIES**



BACK TO THE ROOTS

Angelique Kurth, AEGEE-Aachen

For 30 years AEGEE-Aachen has been part of the Summer University project and the legend says that in one year we even organized two.

"To my knowledge, almost all of them contained a German language course. But enough talking about the dark ages. I can at least give an account of the last 11 years of Summer University, because most of the times I was involved. First as helper, then as German teacher, later as main organizer, part of the organizing team and finally again as a German teacher.

Right after I joined, I convinced my roommate that we should host one of this weird AEGEE guests for this so called Summer University. Luckily, he agreed and so we met Carlos from Valencia, the first of many guests and later friends. I

remember Batu from Izmir, Chris from Greece, Arnold from Netherlands, Kevin from Spain, Lucie from Czechia, Marjola from Albania, Enrico from Italy and another Carlos from Spain. I am so sorry for the ones I can't remember right now. Besos." – language responsible and SU dinosaur.

In Aachen we've mostly followed the same basic structure for all those years: we organize a German language course, we host people in our homes, we spend a weekend in some cottage, mostly in the Eifel mountains, and we travel to Cologne, Maastricht, Bonn and Düsseldorf.

The advantage is on the one hand that this way we have a clear structure, and people know what to expect. There are always organizers of the previous years

present to help and give advice. On the other hand organizers have enough freedom to implement their own ideas and activities. Once we had a green SU, another time we went to Ruhrgebiet (Essen) instead of to the Eifel mountains. Sometimes we did camping or biked to Maastricht. Almost everything is possible and nobody will say "You can't do this!". Okay, maybe they will if the idea is really too crazy.

Our SU has always been a good mix of continuity and innovation.

Aachen's SU is also special because its working language is German. Until today we follow the roots of the first Summer University idea back in 1988, of a time when things like TSUs didn't exist and SUs focused more on culture, soft skills and languages. We request a sufficient level of German to make it an awesome learning possibility for everyone. Therefore, as an acceptance criteria we ask participants to write their motivation letters completely in German.

Of course, almost every year we have one or two participants that hardly know anything, because a friend wrote their letter, but it usually works out fine and they learn a lot, even if they might struggle every now and then. Since we have beginners, people who

We request a sufficient level of German to make it an awesome learning possibility for everyone

are pretty fluent and some who basically speak on a native level, giving a good experience to all of them is quite challenging. So first, we divide them in two groups and ask what they want to learn or repeat.

Moreover, we really strive to underline the University part of the project – in this year's SU in Aachen we had workshops on all of AEGEE's four focus areas, delivered by AEGEE-Academy trainers and project partners (Y

Vote, Adventurers, Europe Direct, etc.). In our opinion it is important to show that these sessions can be as fun and interactive as any other point of the program. It is all about a good balance between language, workshops, activities and social program!

People learn a bit about our dialect, songs and of course a carnival party happens every year. But there is more than only our language course: Aachen is located between the traditional Rheinland, where the carnival comes from. We live next to the biggest industrial-urban area in Germany, the Ruhr area, which offers countless cultural institutions and of course we live at the border with Belgium and the Netherlands. As we

Participants really have to be motivated to handle our program

are influenced by so many regions it takes quite some time to get to know all the different cultures, traditions and customs. But of course, we want our participants to understand as much of our local culture as possible. That's why we organize trips to all of these cities. Earlier I talked about having a hard time at our SU. That's no joke. Participants really have to be motivated to handle our program: There is not only the language course but also the cultural program. And - as everybody knows - Aachen polar bears like to party! With this mixture of fun and getting to know new things there is not much time left for sleeping. But don't worry – organizers will sleep even less.

DARE TO TAKE DECISIONS

Jana Niedringhaus, AEGEE-Passau & Society & the Environment Interest Group

Some weeks ago, when we were asked to write something about our experience as trainers for the Summer University (SU) sLOVEnia - the Green Adventure, our very first thought was: 'how are we going to put into words this experience'? But here we are, giving it our best shot to describe what this project meant to us and what it may tell you about 30 years of Summer University in general.

But first things first, who are we? The Society & Environment Interest Group (SEIG) of AEGEE is a European body dedicated to make some changes within and outside the association. With a core team of seven people, we actively work towards these goals by: 1) increasing awareness; 2) educate; and 3) making AEGEE a more sustainable organisation itself.

It was all about the eager to contribute to the Network in the form of sharing our knowledge and using our skills on the topic of sustainability

Months before the summer, SEIG received a request to give training at the SU of AEGEE-Maribor and AEGEE-Ljubljana. Like often within AEGEE, an informal proposal to join forces was sent through social media. The request was if we could provide the full SU content, all on sustainability. Obviously, spreading the word of sustainability had worked! So the rest of the moderators' team of SEIG was contacted, and together we discussed our possibilities to make it happen. And for a Summer University, this is where the magic happens: in the moment in which a group of young people decides to dedicate time to a project. There can be many reasons for this: having a learning experience, getting out of your comfort zone, gaining soft skills and knowl-

edge, experiencing project coordination or organisation. For SEIG, it was all about the eager to contribute to the Network in the form of sharing our knowledge and using our skills on the topic of sustainability. After a first skype with the local organisers of Maribor and Ljubljana, the decision was clear from both sides: while the local organisers' team was working hard for preparations, SEIG would prepare the full content of the Summer University. And the topic was: 'green'. Yes, 'green'. This is a challenge SEIG deals with on a regular basis: translating the needs for content regarding sustainability into clear learning goals, specific content, and a proper level for participants. In this process we got advice from experienced trainers within AEGEE, resorting to one of the many useful resources we have in our association. Many hours of skype meetings later, which are by the way also cosy social moments within SEIG, we came up with the following idea for the content of sLOVEnia: 'A day in a life'. Each and every session should cover a topic related to day-to-day life like food or fashion industry. Apart from concrete topics we also included sessions talking about concepts like 'how to be a changemaker' or minimalism. Deciding on this red line for the Summer University was another important decision in the process of shaping the content and making it a unique and memorable experience for all.

After months of skype meetings, reaching out to the Network for advice and help, reading materials and working on our own representation and skills, the time had come: SU was starting! Two of our team made their long Flixbus travels to Maribor, where the most magical learning experience of our lives so far began. The funny thing is, even after many months of preparation, you discover how much work there is still to be done when arriving at the SU itself. Where will the sessions take place? How do we stay updated about the schedule? Is the level of knowledge of the participants really as we

estimated? Can we join the wonderful evening events at night or will we be too tired? Oh, and will markers be provided, and what about a projector for our presentations? Help! Even with the excellent organisation of AEGEE-Maribor and AEGEE-Ljubljana, many questions pop up the first day. And here again, we made a decision that was important for the rest of our and for the participants' experience: we decided to trust on the organisers and let go, and to enjoy the group of people that got together in Slovenia. We decided to contribute not only as trainers but also by living in the moment together with the participants. And the organisers seemed to do the same: altogether, we merged in a strong and fun group of young people. Nevertheless, we spent about every free moment outside of activities to do last-moment touch-ups, to have short meetings to update each other on feedback of participants, and last-minute changes in discussion with the organisers. It wasn't easy but we decided to enjoy every minute. This enabled us to connect to all the amazing people around us and also seemed to foster a counter-decision from the participants' side: they decided to actively participate in our sessions, always making time to give us feedback that we value, and... not falling asleep during our sessions!

There was definitely a learning effect on both sides. Apart from improving our training skills and stepping out of our comfort zone, it was remarkable to see that we actually DO have an impact. Oftentimes, the question comes up if a single person can really make a difference in the world. This is probably something every idealistic person has to go through once in a while. During the SU, we absolutely saw that we can make a change. A large group of people worked on the topic of sustainability, thinking and talking about it, questioning own habits and having 'Aha' moments. Especially in our last session we got a lot of feedback on which session had the most impact on the behavior and lives of our participants. Generally, they were super enthusiastic about making changes at home and spreading the word. Even weeks after the SU the participants still asked us about related documentaries worth watching or for help for preparing an own sustainability workshop in their local.

It was really an amazing experience to see how two weeks of SU can tackle important topics while having fun and making memories, how it can strongly impact people. All that because a group of people decided to dedicate their free time.

So, what is it we want to tell you with sharing our experience as SU trainers here? It is all about decisions: a decision to devote your time to a project like SU, the decision to collaborate and have mutual trust in your collaboration partners, the decision of participants that decide to meet a full group of strangers in a yet-to-be-discovered country, a decision to completely trust local organisers for two full weeks, and our decision to fully enjoy our experience and giving the very best of ourselves during every session (regardless of the lack of sleep, some last-minute changes, and limited resources). This is what makes AEGEE and the Summer University Project so unique: because the magic is created all together!



GREECE IN THE ERA OF THE REFUGEES CRISIS

Luca Bisighini, AEGEE-Brescia & Migration Interest Group

Back in the Summer of 2015 I witnessed - as many of you reading this story - one of the events which most influenced current Europe: the migration wave from southeast Europe, from Turkey up to Germany and passing through dozens of countries. As many young Europeans, I felt powerless, not able to react properly while a whole series of dramatic events happened in Europe. Something has drastically changed since then, and not always for the good. With plenty of curiosity from there on, I started feeling that I needed to do something else: supporting charities, informing myself and react to the huge hate speech I witnessed from many sides.

We had the chance to talk to many people and despite all of the cultural obstacles between us, we tried to put ourselves in the refugees' shoes, imagining what they must have gone (and be going) through

With all of this willingness I approached and later joined the Summer University offered by AEGEE-Peiraias in 2016, one year after the peak of crisis. I soon found myself on a flight to Athens, Greece.

After a week of acquaintance in Athens and its surroundings with the other young people from all over Europe, we were able to sail to Lesbos. By that time we had many discussions and talks about what was going on and moments of reflection, reviewing what was supposed to happen and what we could have witnessed. While staying in the neighbourhood of Mytilene, we had our last talks to get prepared to go,

and some background information on what was going on.

The first visit was at Camp Moria, one of the largest refugee centers in Europe today, home to almost ten thousand refugees by that time. We were told both by authorities and intercultural mediators that the situation in the camp was not feasible for a safe visit due to recent landings. Camp Moria was in fact hosting most of the newcomers arriving from Turkey.

Afterwards we moved to another refugee camp, where we had the chance to stay for a few days: Kara Tepe. Over there the situation was much calmer, although saying "calm" is in any case a big thing: that camp was mostly inhabited by families and people who had settled earlier that year.

After a briefing from the camp chief, who instructed us on what was going on and what to do, we started touring the camp and seeing most of the camp's life. We had the chance to hear some of the saddest stories, assisted by translators, but also witnessing them with our own eyes: the harsh reality of a camp, many refugees trapped in a limbo of bureaucracy, asylum processes and intercultural clashes between people of different ethnic backgrounds living on very limited space with total strangers.

It was hard to listen to those many volunteers from all of Europe telling us about their upsetting experiences in the camp. Regardless of the setbacks, they were still trying to live up to their best intentions with a smile. They told us about their efforts to process what was going on, to provide the best of help and education to the families and making them feel slightly better. It was

indeed a radical experience for me which often comes back to my mind... I would like to know what happened to some of the people I met there and if things turned out good.

We had the chance to talk to many people and despite all of the cultural obstacles between us, we tried to put ourselves in the refugees' shoes, imagining what they must have gone (and be going) through. One night we attended some sort of traditional celebration as well. Another night we ended up among us, SU participants, in a sort of "round table discussion" on what happened to us on Lesbos and what we can do in return as young active citizens of Europe. That night a bond was born, something stronger than any team-building activity could ever create.

Understanding and trying to offer support in the middle of a humanitarian crisis is not easy and it takes some emotional effort to make an individual realize what is going on beyond the media portrayal that you follow from distance. I can tell you that I felt this emotional burden clearly and heavily. Since that summer I am

trying to explain to many, many people - even the ones who are harsh on migrants - what it means to be at the camp.

It's not easy at all and it takes some time to grasp the whole picture, maybe even years. I personally felt many times that I must understand, I must accept and I must swallow the ultra-bitter taste of toxic visions and toxic hatred against migrants that parts of our society spread, because every step I take to work against these movements feel right, as regardless of all differences, we are all humans in the end.

From that experience, there is no turning point. We need to act more justly, we need to express more solidarity and think beyond the "societal burden" of providing help to migrants fleeing to Europe, even when you feel - as aforementioned - powerless like me a year before the SU in 2015.

Thanks to the Summer University in Greece and those particular days in Lesbos, we have changed, changed for the better.



CULTURE MEETS POLITICS

Lucca Baggi, AEGEE-Bergamo & Politics Interest Group

When I get to Munich it's early in the morning. At Hauptbahnhof I grab a salty pretzel at the closest bakery and walk up to the tram station. I know where I have to go: people from AEGEE-München gave us a detailed map on how to reach the dorms.

The first face I see is Anja's, then I meet Maksim. They're both Russian, and moved to Munich some years ago to study. Then I get to speak with Annika about cars. One hour later, Ilknur arrives and we hug tightly: it's been one year since we last saw each other. She was already in Germany before coming here: she comes from Frankfurt, where she stayed at Leonardo's place, but originally she flew from Ankara. Leo too is a pretty amazing pal. He's born in Germany, but his father comes from Italy. His mother's side is quite outstanding too: she is from the United Kingdom, but her parents were from the States.

When we, participants, organizers and trainers, move to the nearby park to have a picnic, we play some funny ice-breaking games to start remembering our names, but of course I won't remember them until I get down to some real private talk with each of them.

I start to grasp the twofold responsibility on me: it is my first Summer University and my first time as a trainer, too. Just one month before I was in Greece doing a really demanding training about inclusion in youth organizations, the DIVE Project, which was entirely funded by Erasmus+ grants. I had amazing trainers from Central and Eastern Europe: a German, Lucas, a Czech with Russian origins, Ivan, and an outstanding PhD Polish pal, Radek. I want to live up to their quality trainings, and be as helpful to the participants of this Summer University as they were to me in Athens.

We spent the evening at Biedersteiner Fasching, the coolest dorm I have ever been to (and possibly ever

will). We're hosted by Abhi, AEGEE-München member who in fact is an Indian student of IT in Munich. While we wait for the dinner to be ready, I look at Ilknur, Leonardo and Maksim, who are trainers as well as I am (Dorothea, the last trainer, will reach us later), and the other organizers, and I gather the participants in a circle.

The European Night is something magical

We look at each other and start to familiarize, and then repeat the name game since there are new faces and then I ask them what I was already asked in Athens: why are you here, and what do you expect to accomplish with this Summer University. I do it for several reasons: first of all, we want to make it clear that this SU will be heavily content-focused. What we have planned for them is a MUN, Model United Nations, and also a MEU, a Model European Union. It took us, trainers, a couple of months to plan everything: carefully select the countries involved, develop their personality according to the events actually going on in the world, and draft the material upon which they will be working on. This simulations will be the apex of our SU, EUROPA - Written in Capitals, and on the last day we will bring them to Strasbourg to visit the European Parliament. We, organizers, want all of them to understand how crucial this is.

The response we get does not let us down. Saul and Saul (yes, there are two) came here because of this. I'll speak with the latter one only in French, since we both know the language and prefer it over English. The guys from Spain will make a close group: we'll call them the Spanish Ghetto. I don't have time to speak about all of



them, but sure I do have words for everyone.

There are two girls from Hungary, Petra and Dorottya, one from Malta, and two Georgians: Ana and Teona. Teo tells me she'd love to improve on her English. The same goes for Anna, from Russia. She is really shy, because she has only been studying the language for a year. I stare at her and

I was astonished by the strength I drew out of me, as all of us. Why? Because this is Summer University, AEGEE, Europe

tell her that she is doing great, and actually her English is at least on par with everybody else's. A couple of days later, I will ask her about Russia and how things are going. She will look me in the eyes and say words I will never forget: «There is no democracy in Russia. It's just Putin».

The day after, I get to talk with Taha, from Macedonia. In less than two months there will be a crucial referendum in the country, which will open the doors for them to enter the EU. He is deadly serious about the matter, as his compatriot Diana is. When the European Night comes, they will bring the most outstanding food: Diana's grandfather even made some grappa for the occasion.

You see, the European Night is something magical. In the dorm's hall, every participant shows off the food of his nation. People get together to prepare some amazing and diverse food, while each country representative explains what it is. We Italians cook pasta (the right way) and bring pastries. The girls from Georgia offer us some delicate wine. Kurrham, an AEGEE veteran, has not much to offer, since he is from the UK, but we appreciate his candies nonetheless. Danish stroopwaffle evaporate, while we taste Czech liquor. And the list goes on.

At some point Mirek, one of the main organizers, calls

me and praises my high energy and enthusiasm. We toast and I only then I realize how special this is. Mirek's words struck me, because they made me realize how differently I was behaving from what I normally do at home. Lack of sleep, fatigue and workshops did not tire me out: I will only get drained once I get back home. I was astonished by the strength I drew out of me, as all of us. Why? Because this is Summer University, AEGEE, Europe.

I felt so close and connected to each one of the participants that I wanted to give the maximum to them. Back in the circle, I told them that my goal was to be the tool to have them accomplish their goals. When watching around me, listening to their stories and fears about the political situation of Europe and tasting the food they prepared with care and showed with pride, I could finally understand what Europe is all about. This inclusion preserves diversity, and fosters peace. The rich-

We crossed our paths only because of this dream, which we call Europe

ness of all of the peoples who are Europe and want to be part of it is invaluable, and something to be proud of. The colors and flavors of the food was at the same time so familiar and unknown, as were the stories of those thirty students I shared fifteen days of hard work with.

This dedication and sparkle in their eyes was what animated and motivated them through the MEU. During the one-day-long simulation, they learnt the efforts of bargaining and that of accepting a compromise for a greater good: a peaceful and warm, welcoming Europe. They share the burning feelings that I have been harboring in me, and discovered and named only then.

Maksim and Anja fled from Russia to live in a better and more fair place. Diana and Taha want to become part of the EU as soon as they can, as Theo and Ana do (there was an important election in Georgia, too). We crossed our paths only because of this dream, which we call Europe.

One project
HUGE IMPACT



HOW MY LIFE GOT FLIPPED-TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

Emily Franchini, AEGEE-Verona

Socks: in!
Swimming clothes: in!
Toothpaste: in!

The luggage was done, ready for the first Summer University of my life.

I packed all my stuff in a trolley and a little bag because at least 30 new people from all over Europe, participants and organizers, were going, like me, to the Netherlands.

It was my first time taking the plane completely alone, flying to a place

I had never been before and also my English sucked a bit. It was even my very first time of hitchhiking and last but not least, the first time I tried pbj (I'm still addicted!).

All of that made me excited and afraid at the same time but I thought probably all the other participants were in my same situation, so I landed there and experienced the best holiday of my life. Since then, I started to travel all around in a new way. Not as a tourist with a

map, seeing the main places, going in the same bars, following reviews.

I was trying food and living traditions as a local, moving all over by bike around the channels. Learning a lot about different cultures every day.

After the very first ice-breaking game there's no weird accent, no skin color, no habits, neither fashion which can stop people from building friendships or more

What impressed me the most was building friendships at the full speed: in two weeks I met such amazing AEGEEans and I'm still in contact with some of them! And it's simply awesome ... then I applied for my second SU in Germany and I found a ton of gorgeous people again, also people who were living or studying in different countries from their hometown.

As a result, after two Summer Universities I got friends from all over Europe, from Portugal to Russia, friends I do look forward to see again, to talk a lot with them about our experiences and our lives. This actually changed my mind a lot, because I came from a small town, spoke little English, never thought about moving or living in another city, not to mention another country. Despite of that, after the SUs, I realized that there are actually no big differences between people. After the very first ice-breaking game there's no weird accent, no skin color, no habits, neither fashion which can stop people from building friendships or more. During my first SU a couple of participants fell in love with each



So, even if I was shy about public speaking, I went to the aula magna of my university to explain AEGEE at the welcome week for the exchange students.

All in all, without the Summer University project my future won't ever been so full of changes: SUs helped me to improve my English, talking with strangers, giving a speech in public, going around Europe alone but excited to meet new young friends. Sharing life experiences with others and having friends in all corners of

other. During my second I figured out they were kind of engaged even though they come from two different countries, and they had met in a third one (the NL). They made their relationship possible by hanging out all over Europe for a whole year! So after this, what is the real matter of distances?

It's only about our determination, bravery and pursuing what we want to do with our lives. After becoming an AEGEEan my mind was completely flipped-turned upside down: being borne in one country doesn't mean that you have to stick with it for your entire life..

I filled my luggage with some stuff before leaving, but then I went back with much more than souvenirs and magnets, I came back with the desire to move and meet other people, sharing thoughts, music tastes...ideas. Because each SU has a main topic, which allows you to go on a journey to the interests and perspectives of other participants. Talking about everything, from LGBT+ to the environment, from politics to civic education, from ethics to stereotypes, but you also express your own ideas and views through your personal active participation in workshops.

When I came back from my holidays I was so enthusiastic about AEGEE that I started to become more active in my antenna, because I wanted all the other students to discover the amazing Summer Universities project.

I filled my luggage with some stuff before leaving, but then I went back with much more than souvenirs and magnets, I came back with the desire to move and meet other people, sharing thoughts, music tastes...ideas

Europe helped me to think about moving. A Summer University is something which can change your life forever: you only need to open your mind and go.

I finished my studies and I'm moving in May next year, and this plan wouldn't have been possible without the SUs I participated in. Thanks to the SUs all of this became real. But I'm not the only one, there are a lot of turned-flipped AEGEEans all over Europe who aren't living in their hometown nor country. They're living their lives as European Citizens ravenous of traveling and living randomly everywhere. Let's go looking for them! Let's be one of them!

THE SUMMER OF MY LIFE BECAME THE BEST YEARS OF MY LIFE

Philip Læborg, AEGEE-København

Have you ever tried how one random search on google has changed your entire life? A google search that enabled you to understand some of the most complex issues our continent is facing today. One google search that has driven you across a continent. One google search that has both made you furious and madly happy. A google search that pushed you to do something extra for other people and enabled you to inspire many other young Europeans. Well, I had that google search and this is my story of one amazing journey that is far from over.

I thought it was just going to be a summer flirt, but I ended up falling in love with this organization

The adventure started back in the early winter of 2016. The first semester of my master degree had passed and after a successful and amazing experience of Erasmus in Vilnius, Lithuania back in 2014, I was striving to get back out. I was missing the feeling of adventure and building lots of new relations with people that could bring a perspective to my own background. However, I also tried to build a professional career and had a job that I did not want to leave, which conflicted with my ambitions of going abroad for a semester. Hence, I did what every young person does in today's society when we face life existential questions – google. However, initially google did not provide many answers and the search quickly developed into what I should do in my summer. This search would be the one that started my adventure. Initially, I came across a travelling opportunity for students called “Summer University”

but I quickly found out that it's the European Students' Forum AEGEE that organize the project. Unfortunately, there were no AEGEE locals around in Denmark and you had to be a member to join and take part in the SU. Fortunately, through a bit of emailing I learned that I could just become a member in a local in another country. Before I knew it, I was signed up for Summer University in a city called Cagliari in Sardinia, a place I had barely heard of before. Adding on top that I still did not know anything about this organization called “AEGEE” what-so-ever I landed in Cagliari 6 months later.

The Summer University I attended had a sports theme so a side from learning a lot about Italian and Sardinian culture we also had a great amount of fun playing games and competing on a beautiful island I would never have dreamt of visiting before.

The two weeks flew past and me along with other participants still consider those days as the best two weeks of our lives.. It is almost indescribable - the emotions and connections that were formed within only 14 days. In two weeks, we went from complete strangers to something more than just friends and for the first time I felt the “AEGEE spirit”. Before I flew off to Sardinia, I thought it was just going to be a summer flirt, but I ended up falling in love with this organization. The crazy traditions, urge to learn more about other cultures and meeting some of the most interesting people I have ever met. People who inspired me.

Since there was still no local in Copenhagen, I took a big decision to form a local branch on my own. It was a real challenge. There were many different questions that had to be answered, new members, statues, activi-

ties, finances and all this in an organization that I only knew from two weeks where anything but these things were the topic. I only knew that it was too early to quit if I wanted to give anything back to the organization that had given me the summer of my life. Today, about two years later, the local that I founded has just received promotion in the network.

I am no longer just the person with a lot of unanswered questions and lack of inspiration. I have become one of the people that can inspire other young people and enable them to chase their dreams. That sounds like big words, but I have seen how people that I went to Cagliari with are organizing large events for hundreds or even thousands of young people across Europe. Events that inspire and teach young people the diversity of our continent. People sometimes ask me if I still identify myself with Denmark. I am and I feel Danish, but that does not prevent me from loving and appreciating other cultures in Europe as well as embracing their value for other people and even adapting some of them myself. That random google search has enabled me to create friendships across Europe. I have met many of the people again, travelled almost every country in Europe and started learning a new language. Further, I have learned a lot about the important issues on our continent. Discussed the problematic situation in Catalonia, status in Ukraine and Georgia with both Russians,

It is two weeks packed with the potential for life changing events that gives many new friends, adventures and knowledge all while having an extreme amount of fun and most importantly a great amount of inspiration to take on life

Georgians and Ukrainians and learned the stereotypes between north and south of Italy to mention some issues.



HOW ONE SUMMER CAN CHANGE IT ALL

Bor de Kock, AEGEE-Eindhoven

We all think we are adventurous people. Well, at least that's what I kept telling myself: who knows where I will end up in life? Naturally I will explore the entire world as soon as I've graduated. Of course I won't just stick around in the same city. Surely I won't have a hard time taking the leap and saying goodbye to all the people I know.

Because life is all about adventures, right?

One of the last big adventures I went on was the Traveling Summer University called Beercome a Changemaker that I joined a few months ago, during the summer of 2018. The TSU was organized by the AEGEE locals in Bamberg, Erfurt and Dresden, and also contained visits to Nuremberg, Weimar, Eisenach and Leipzig. The theme: how social activism and social awareness can change the world we live in, and how knowing the past can help shaping the future.

This theme meant the SU was content-wise quite intense: the workshops we took during the day were on activism, the rise of PEGIDA and other right-wing activist movements, as well as on other controversial topics in modern society. It also meant that we visited the remnants of the nazi party rally grounds, the memorial site at former concentration camp Buchenwald and the museum at a former DDR execution site. While SUs are already known to be quite intense in terms of day-programme and nightlife, this additional emotional intensity made it two very heavy weeks for both the participants and the organizers.

While the Summer University theme was mostly about the paths one chooses for the world, I had another mission at the time: to figure out my own path for the years to come. I started my AEGEE adven-

ture quite late in my student life: not as a freshman looking for friends and activities in my new town, but rather at the very end of it all. When I applied, I was busy writing my master's thesis and was in desperate need of an activity for summer 2018, knowing I would want to do something cool in the summer, but also knowing I wouldn't be able to plan something big myself.

The theme: how social activism and social awareness can change the world we live in, and how knowing the past can help shaping the future

The SU I went on thus, came at an exciting point in my life: I had just received a diploma, but no other plans yet. And of course, I thought of myself as the adventurer and was sure I would go and do adventurous, amazing things, but then the time was there to actually make a decision: should I leave the city I know and love and move to some new place far away? Is it even possible to make new friends once you decide to leave everything you have behind?

Although I wasn't aware of it while I signing up, my first Summer University turned out to come at exactly the right time. That summer, I needed to experience what it is like to go to new places in other parts of Europe and how simple it can be to make new friends when you end up at a unknown place, in order to be able to solve that big dilemma of what to do afterwards.

So how did the experience of only one summer help me shape my own future? From the many workshops and activities I learned that life is what you make out of it yourself, and that the adventures you go on and the



that we can change Europe and its place in the world ourselves by standing up for what we believe in

experiences you have are determined by only what you decide to do yourself. It showed me that sometimes the only thing you have to do to become a different person in a few days is to make the impulsive decision to join a project that you maybe know very little about, but simply sounds very cool. On top of that, it showed me how the decisions you make in life can influence not only your own life and the lives of those around you, but that we as people are able to influence the entire society we live in and that we can change Europe and its place in the world ourselves by standing up for what we believe in and by making a change for real.

And maybe most important of all, it showed me once again how easy it is to gain an amazing group of friends, even though you come from completely different cultures, countries and backgrounds.

And that is what my SU experience made me do: after the summer of my dreams, I took the leap once more and go for that next adventure. After the experiences settled in and the sleep levels were on a normal level again, I decided to give up the safe haven I built for myself and move some 1700 km northwards, to a part of Europe where even the bicycles need winter tires and where most winter days only have a few hours of sunshine. And it turns out I'm loving every bit of it.

So did the SU change the way I see Europe and the world? It definitely did. Those two weeks that felt like two months made an impact on my life that usually takes two years to settle in. It gave me new perspectives on life and helped me make new friends. And would I have dared to take this great new step without my Summer University experience? I'd like to think those great weeks in the southeast of Germany gave me that final push I needed to go on the next adventure.

HOW THE SUMMER UNIVERSITY PROJECT CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Carolina Alfano, AEGEE-Salerno & former SUCT

"What's your experience with Summer University?"

Hard to reply to this question, if all your experiences and memories are related to Summer University. Pictures, emotions, feelings I have lived in these years are with me every day because they have transformed my attitude to see the world around me and my whole life.

My journey started in 2011 with my first SU as an organizer: I heard a lot of amazing stories about the «Non solo sole» Summer University, the famous SU of Salerno, and I was so excited and extremely motivated to dive in that experience. 30 participants from all around Europe, new friends, different cultures, fifteen intense days and no desire to go to sleep.

The Summer University Project also means working with members from different cultures and backgrounds

After hundreds of smiles and tears of participants and 4 years, I decided to apply for a Summer University, to put myself on the other side, because during a SU, organizers and participants are together the essential parts of a unique coin.

Serbia and Macedonia were my destinations: no common places for an Italian tourist. There I got the point! I realized the different sides of the same coin: the strive to discover, the challenge to get out of your comfort zone, the ability to adapt and adjust yourself to the situations, how significant it is to spend 15 days non-stop with new people.

After my Balkan adventure, my life as a volunteer changed. Because when an association provides you a lot of opportunities to be the active person you want to be, at some point, it's time to give back to it.

My candidature as a member of the Summer University Coordination Team (SUCT) started as a game, but then I recognized I was able to furnish a new shade to the amazing coin, called Summer University.

Together with my lovely and «sarcastic» team members, Lucia, Yevgeniya and Philipp we achieved our goals, we started improving the content of the project, and finally yet importantly, we really enjoyed working hard that year. The Summer University Project also means working with members from different cultures and backgrounds, with different points of view and ways to work and it's a very deep process of personal development.

"Why did you apply for a Summer University?"

This was the question I used to ask participants during my SUCT trip around Europe. 7 Summer Universities, 1 month, and I didn't count how many organizers and participants I have met.

In these cases, it becomes very visible why this project is the oldest and biggest one of AEGEE, and what is its impact on people: the Summer University project is a life-changing experience. I saw it. I saw the stars in participants' eyes, I saw the effort and commitment of organizers, and I saw how they spent «the Summer of Their Life» sharing opinions, contrasting their impressions, and changing their entire mindsets.

Another challenge called Summer University was the «Italian Grand Tour», a Traveling Summer University, where my function was to coordinate the coordinators, providing them support, advice, assistance and all help when required.

25 participants, 17 days, 10 cities visited, 5 organizing antennae, 1 Italian Grand Tour. For the first time in Italy, we tried to organize a TSU with five antennae and a long trip through all of Italy, from North to South: an unimaginable event exploring Italian culture, Italian style and Italian food.

A puzzle born in 1988 and still able to give away unforgettable experiences, no conventional cultural exchanges and the opportunity to become open-minded European citizens

All these episodes are pieces of the same puzzle: a puzzle born in 1988 and still able to give away unforgettable experiences, no conventional cultural exchanges and the opportunity to become open-minded European citizens.

All these sides of the same coin demonstrate, how relevant the impact of the SU project is currently: 4 of that 25 participants are now Erasmus students in Italy, I met 10 of them again during an event in Istanbul just a few months ago, 8 of them are becoming very active as AEGEE volunteers in their cities, and I'm expecting amazing projects from them.

All these numbers are able, alone, to confirm the title of this article: definitely, the Summer University project can change your life!

Come, and see it with your own eyes!



YOUTH CAN DO IT

Anastasiia Sheremet, AEGEE-Odessa & SUCT

Many people have their first encounter with AEGEE during their participation in the network's biggest project – Summer University: Those two weeks when a mixed group of total strangers with different backgrounds meets in one place to have the time of their lives and get united by the same idea of a physically and mentally borderless Europe. Exactly that happened to me and fellow AEGEEans from my antenna. So, the desire to pay back to the organization, to give even more value to future participants by creating our own projects in Odessa, arose from these life-changing summers.

It is common to host one event per local but the enthusiasm in the team was so high that we believed we can do more than that. And actually did. In cooperation with other antennas and the AEGEE-Academy trainers we performed two Summer Universities in one season, covering two different topics: the power of blogging in the era of Internet and the impact of the

youth on international politics. The second theme was developed together with our Russian partner antennae in order to demonstrate that the ongoing war between our countries is neither an offspring nor the will of the young generation nor derives it from the public to incite hostility and destroy our relationships. The goal was to show what we can do in such conditions to make our voices be heard and friendship revived. Experts in civic education, lobbying and advocacy campaigns were invited to enforce the idea that even one person can make a change and explain a step-by-step guide on this complex path. Besides that, we wanted to make participants dive deeply into local culture, taste traditional cuisine and try to cook it, learn Ukrainian common phrases and practice them while negotiating food prices at an open-air market, dress-up in national costumes and have a thematic photo session and many other activities that were making the schedule intense yet interesting.

In total, we hosted 80 participants in one month and had the chance to see how some of them were developing as individuals and changing their way of thinking during our Summer Universities. Usually, a person is living the life that he or she is used to and that is accepted by its surroundings, but then 40 young Europeans from different corners of the continent gather and magic begins. That person comes to the realization that out there the world is full of human beings who do all kind of things differently and are actually doing surprisingly fine. That is a cultural shock at first that then transforms into a diversity-tolerant mindset with time.

However, not only participants benefit from the Summer University but so do organizers, and in our case even twice. As we, Ukrainians, are integrating with the EU it is crucial to understand its peculiarities and to analyze the perspectives of our common future to build a long-term cooperation between us. We can talk

This Project is also about acquiring skills of project management, teamwork, public speaking, negotiations, fundraising etc

many hours about European cultures, explain how the EU institutions work, discuss the difference between nationalities among ourselves and the desired result is still not guaranteed. During only one short face-to-face meeting with real people the vision can be altered and that is what we achieved this summer. Our team felt like part of a big international family; despite all social, economic and other differences our European identity only grew stronger. We became active on all levels, contributing even more towards building a caring and

conscious society around us. Our inspiration spread onto all spheres, starting from politics when we are preparing debates about upcoming presidential elections and ending with designing a sustainable development plan for the region. Thereby, what is initially planned to be a great occasional vacation turns people into active citizens who act as change-makers, who we need right now, and that is why the Summer University Project has such a long success story.

Apart from inner changes, this Project is also about acquiring skills of project management, teamwork, public speaking, negotiations, fundraising etc. As the participation fee is low, so that many people can afford the trip, organizers should always come up with ideas on how to realize planned activities with a (very) limited budget. However, everybody is trying to offer the best program and stuff it as much as possible with great content. Additional resources are usually needed and that is exactly when fundraising saves the situation. Here, in Ukraine, we have an ace up the sleeve because working with the government becomes easier when European initiatives are mentioned due to the direction our country has chosen in the past years. Negotiations with authorities, business or NGOs can be an intimidating task but only through breaking the barriers of the comfort zone we can progress. Therefore, being a SU responsible implies a lot of work on all stages of preparation which pays off in the long run.

This year we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Summer University Project and words of sincere gratitude and affection were flowing from those who experienced it at least once in their life. Personally, I did it four times, in different roles and with different backgrounds, so now I can state that it was a life transforming adventure that enriched me with knowledge, like-minded people around me and sunny memories to hold on to on a cold winter day. With such warm feelings becoming one of the coordinators of the project was one of my ways to be thankful and grant other young people this astonishing opportunity to rediscover themselves and fall in love with the world.

YOU CAN'T FEEL IT IF YOU DON'T LIVE IT

Evgenia – Yvonne Tseloni, AEGEE-Athina

*"As you set out for Ithaka
hope the voyage is a long one
full of adventure, full of discovery",*

we read in the famous poem of Cavafys' – Ithaka. Well, the Summer University in Russia was my Ithaka and just like a young Odysseus I returned wiser and filled with lifetime experiences. The adventures of this unique travel contributed to my personal development and in the long run helped me to become a wiser and more independent person and a citizen of the world!

Firstly, my SU was a Travelling Summer University which gave me the chance to travel like a local and not as an ordinary tourist in Russia, starting from Moscow and ending up in Vladivostok. In total we visited five different cities in twenty-three days and stayed at Baikal Lake for five days, living just like the locals in tents, cooking traditional Russian foods at a campfire by the lake. At night we were stargazing the milky way for hours while listening to local stories about Shamans.

The adventures of this unique travel contributed to my personal development and in the long run helped me to become a wiser and more independent person and to feel as a citizen of the world!

Nevertheless, I believe that the most important part of this trip were the difficulties and the manner in which we responded to them, allowing only "the rare excitement to stir our bodies and our minds". We were a multicultural group of young people from 25 different European countries with different languages, mentali-

ties and dreams. To make things even more challenging we didn't have any internet connection for the largest part of the trip, so we couldn't communicate with our families and friends. On top of it, the communication

I learnt to adapt to the new conditions and to handle these difficulties, maintaining my positive nature

with the locals, especially in the middle of Siberia, was extremely difficult, because most of them didn't speak English. Moreover, we spent 72 hours in a row on a train and had to survive the harsh conditions with only basic facilities. Last but not least, we had to cope with the isolation from civilization at Lake Baikal which was a 30 minute hike from the nearest remote village.

It is no exaggeration to say that this SU was a challenge for both my physical and my mental stamina. I dealt with all the "Cyclops" and "Laistrygonians" I found on my way without fear but with courage. I learnt to adapt to the new conditions and to handle these difficulties, maintaining my positive nature and "keeping my thought raised high" while improving my communication and language skills through the interaction with so many different people. I "came into a lot of harbors seen for the first time", gathering so many indelible memories: the campfire while we were singing songs and roasting marshmallows, the breathtaking sunrise at Lake Baikal, the delirious happiness when we arrived in Vladivostok and the thoughts and fears we shared on so many different subjects such as family, friends, culture, politics and Europe. These discussions were the perfect "Phoenician trading station" because they did not only help me to understand the mentality of people from other countries but also to develop a unique relation with my travel

companions, making friends for life and feeling that a part of my heart has stayed in this country from which I gained many life lessons. Hence, I really feel I enhanced my team spirit, got rid of my fear of travelling alone and thanks to the many workshops I became more sensitive and aware of the environmental issues.

A year ago I was just a Greek student, but now with my new SU experiences I'm a European one

Now, only one year after my first encounter with the local antenna, feeling more confident, wiser and "so full of experience", I was elected to the board of AEGEE-Athina. I have many ideas in mind and my team and I have already started organizing activities for young people to make our antenna more widely known. Through workshops, seminars and meetings with groups from all European countries, including Greece we focus on helping more people to understand the benefits of being members of such an organization and motivate them to participate in the next SU

Concluding, I would say that every Summer University is an Ithaka for every person who has had the luck to live such an experience. I hadn't had the chance to go abroad before, but the Summer University Project gave me this opportunity and I feel blessed that I grabbed it without a second thought. The Transsiberian SU gave me «the marvelous journey» without which «I would not have set out» to the road for my Ithaka. I gained so much more than I offered, I broadened my knowledge and opened my horizons to new experiences with people who did not share the same nationality but had the same passion for exploring other cultures. For many years I had studied the benefits and the importance to be part of Europe, the similarities among people from other countries, but only now I can feel the European spirit in my soul. A year ago I was just a Greek student, but now with my new SU experiences I'm a European one.



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