

BFUGB12 5

POSSIBLE REQUEST TO JOIN BFUG FROM ASSOCIATION DES ETATS GENERAUX DES ETUDIANTS DE L'EUROPE (AEGEE)

Background

1. During the recent Bologna Seminar at the Holy See, a representative from AEGEE made contact with the Secretariat and advised that AEGEE hoped to increase its engagement with the Bologna Process. Information on AEGEE is attached at Annex A. This was followed up by email after the event and resulted in a request from AEGEE for information on the criteria for consultative and partner membership of the BFUG.
2. The Secretariat sent the criteria (BFUG4 11¹ – agreed at Mondorf on 1-2 March 2005) to AEGEE for information. At the same time, the Secretariat asked ESIB if it might be possible for ESIB to increase its links with AEGEE.

Update

3. ESIB has recently responded to the Secretariat (copy attached at Annex B), agreeing to discuss with AEGEE and other student organisations how they can take European higher education forward, including the Bologna Process.
4. There has been no further approach from AEGEE to the Secretariat, since the exchange of emails about the criteria for BFUG membership.

Conclusion

5. The Board is invited to note the approach from AEGEE and ESIB's letter to the Secretariat, and to note no further action is suggested at this stage.

Bologna Secretariat
May 2006

¹ http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/B/BFUG_Meetings/050301-02Mondorf/BFUG4_11.PDF

The Spirit of AEGEE

"AEGEE is a way of living for me. The spirit of AEGEE inspires me every day! Young people have the chance to travel around Europe and really become European citizens by understanding the culture-spirit of all countries. I like that people so different in many aspects have something in common, AEGEE!!!"
(AEGEE-Member)

Background

AEGEE's birthday is generally recognised as being 16 April 1985. It is one of the biggest interdisciplinary student associations in Europe; it is represented by 15.000 students, active in 241 academic cities, in 40 European countries. AEGEE is a secular, non-profit organization, not linked to any political party.

Aims:

- to promote a unified Europe without prejudices
- to strive for creating an open and tolerant society of today & tomorrow
- to foster democracy, human rights, tolerance, cross-boarder co-operation, mobility and European dimension in education

Fields of Action:

- Cultural Exchange
- Active Citizenship
- Higher Education
- Peace & Stability

Structure

In order to really promote international co-operation and avoid creating any physical or mental borders AEGEE does not recognize any national level or national administration in its unique organizational structure.

Patrons

Include a number of former European Presidents, Prime Ministers and Presidents of European wide institutions such as EC, EUA and the Council of Europe. Mikhail Gorbachev and Eric Froment are included in the list.

Further information is available at their website at:
<http://karl.aegEE.org/>

ANNEX B

Dear Ann Mc Vie

Please excuse our late reply - this was due to the fact that we have been quite busy in ESIB of late, especially since we were organising our board meeting in Serbia and also had to attend various other events related to Higher Education around Europe.

Regarding your email, I can assure you that the strengthening of contacts between ESIB and Aegee, as well as other European student organisations, is one of our top priorities. Yet we also believe that the various European student organisations in Europe are all intrinsically different and thus even though collaboration is very important - we also have to realise that we do have different competences and aims.

ESIB is the representative structure of 45 national unions of students from 34 European countries. Through these unions we represent over 10 million students. These national unions are the recognised bodies on a national level that represent students on all education related issues. Thus we too on a European Level are recognised by the Commission, EUA, Eurashe, EI and all other stakeholders in education as being the representative body of all students.

This is also a reason why in the beginning Aegee, ESIB and ESN were both consulted on the issue of the Bologna Process - but then ESIB was the organisation accepted by the ministers in Prague. It was a sign of recognition by the governments that ESIB, and its members, are indeed elected with the mandate to deal with these educational issues. Thus ESIB deals with all educational issues on the European level - from the Bologna Process to the EU's strategy for growth and jobs; from equality in Higher Education to Students Rights, amongst others. ESIB conducts research, holds surveys, publishes books, organises conferences and issues statements on both European and International trends in Higher Education.

So the distinction between ESIB and other European student organisations, like Aegee, is very apparent in the following ways:

- We have different mandates and whereas ESIB representatives are elected from all the student body to directly deal with general educational issues both on a national and European level; the representatives of these other European Student organisations are elected to deal with more specific issues that may not be directly related to higher education (such as European politics or for example the interests of Erasmus students). Aegee for example deal with European issues and student politics - as much as this is needed in a European debate - it is quite clear that this is a different interest than that of ESIB.
- ESIB members represent the recognised student body in their country - thus it is important to note that ESIB's member unions actually represent all students regardless of their field of study and this thus includes Erasmus students, Aegee members, and the members of various other European student organisations. ESIB members are the national structures within European countries that bring all students together. If I were to take the example of my

home country, Malta, then I can tell you that Aegee, ELSA (European Law Students), Aiesec and a host of other international organisations are actually members of the Maltese national union of students - and thus their local perspective is reflected in the Maltese student union's input within ESIB.

So as much as ESIB is working with Aegee and other European and International student organisations - in order to strengthen the student body - we truly believe that we should all work in our different competence areas - because that is the best thing for the student body.

ESIB, for example, has already offered various organisations free trainings on higher education issues - including Bologna Process. We also have various European student organisations that have become associate members of ESIB - because they recognise ESIB's coordination of Higher Education issues. We believe that the input of these various student organisations can truly help in strengthening the student voice in Europe - but we do believe that there should be one common voice. It is important to keep in mind that this is not simply an Aegee issue - there are quite a large number of European Student organisations out there - and if Aegee should be considered for partner status, then so should be the others. This would definitely complicate matters - and that is why ESIB is trying to get all these organisations together - create a debate - and then yes strengthen the student body on all student issues.

At the end of the day, every interested student is eligible to participate in Bologna events and we very much encourage students to do so. However, we do believe that recognising other organisations as partners in the Bologna process would not be beneficial to the student body at the moment.

I can guarantee you that we will continue to discuss with AEGEE and other European student organisations on how we can all take European higher education forward, including the Bologna Process. I do suggest that however that no action is taken by others on this issue - since I truly believe that through the efforts of ESIB and its members we can truly bring the student body closer together.

Regards

Justin Fenech
Chairperson 2006