

AEGEE brings Cyprus together (ACT): a Challenging Project

Within the Network Trip Project, a very special one has been organised by AEGEE-Europe a trip to Cyprus. This beautiful island and its people had always suffered of their particular status of crossroad between continents, cultures and interests, which brought, in the past decades to a traumatic division, effecting not only the international and regional political relations but also everybody's souls and emotions. AEGEE had always tried to give its contribution, in every situation of Peace Making Processes, addressing itself to young people, backbone of every society. After years of indecision on the possibility to include Cyprus, in the Network, due to the particularity of the issue, in 1997 long term projects on the island began their course.

At the end of October a delegation of AEGEE-Europe, Peter Ginser as President, Paolo Balistrieri as Network Responsible and Fani Zar accompanied by Stella Stylianou (Cyprus citizen) representing the Network Commission for the Area (AEGEE-Albina), went to the island for a week.

The EU Ambassador Mr Anouil, the Cyprus Government, US and German Embassies, the University, the Fullbright Commission and UN officials in the South; the ViceRector of the Famagosta University and other Academicians in the North, received the delegation during their stay. All this official meeting showed clearly the interest and the importance given to such an initiative. AEGEE is an International NGO, offers a significant stage for uncountable matters, interests and claims, but above all tries to create a European union of students not because of political motives but for the high ideals that they possess and for achieving any kind of positive step in peace processe.

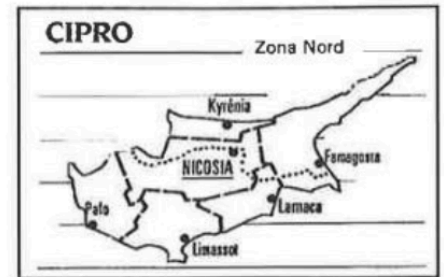
Since some years students, workers and other different classe of the society are joining each other in bicommunal meetings between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, organised by the Fullbright commission in the UN Buffer Zone Nicosia: among them a student group from the North organised in the association «Europa Team», had already been the referent for AEGEE since 1996. Nevertheless the delegation could also meet in the South with the National Youth Board and The Yourth Council for international Co-operation.

Contacts with other students, either active or not in the bi-communal activities, were organised.

Indeed many people have a common septicism on these kind of initiatives, due to an already too many times strumentalised situation.

In all the meetings, AEGEE experience was as a tool to overcome understandable psychological barriers towards each other. What was tried to achieve is anyway a major involvement of Cypriot students in AEGEE, participating in European events and projects, creating their owns in the framework of the association and beyond.

In December, an important follow up of the trip was already undertaken:



Within the Conference organised by AEGEE-Aix-En-Provence, «the EU and the Mediterranean», the Cyprus issue had a major role: about 40 AEGEE members from all over Europe could follow and participate to workshops and panel discussions: Professor Bicac From Eastern Mediterranean University of Famagosta (already met by the delegation) and Mr. Zemenos of the Cyprus French Embassy partecipated, the moderator was Mr. J. Boarinet Director of the international Research Center in Aix. AEGEE Working Groups like the Europe OF The Regions-WG, Human Rights-WG and International Politics WG are going to organise thematical conferences of seminars, in order to bring more knowledge to European students on the issue. Nevertheless the action plans will see a new Trip on the island of Markus Schonher, current Network Responsible of AEGEE-Europe, in February and above all the scheduled Case Study Trip, which will see 25 European Students visiting and studying the Region the month of April 1998.

Hopefully, once AEGEE had decided to take off with all this projects on the island, could in the future give a real contribution to the break down of the last wall dividing a European Capital, Nicosia, helping its people to leave in a peaceful country.

(Article by Paolo Balistrieri)

