

PROGRESS REPORT of the VISA FREEDOM WORKING GROUP OF AEGEE-EUROPE

Agora Skopje - Agora Enschede

The working group made a big progress and since Agora Skopje can fully contribute to the projects and the Action Agenda of AEGEE.

General information

- Contact e-mail: visa@aegee.org
- Website: www.wg.aegee.org/vfwg
- Mailing lists: VISA-L, VISA-MEMBERS-L, VISA-BOARD-L
- Facebook fan group: Visa Freedom Working Group of AEGEE-Europe
- Application form:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/viewform?formkey=dHRFNm1ORUN4dU9MU3VhUzdPS0tUbEE6MQ#gid=0>
- Members update: We got 6 new members in the last 2 month and 25 members on the whole.
- Board members:

<i>Speaker</i>	Jana Pokorna	jana.pokorna@aegee.org
<i>Secretary</i>	Thomas Bonnefoy	bonnefoy.t@gmail.com
<i>HR Responsible</i>	Burak Topaloğlu	topaloglu.burak@gmail.com
<i>PR Responsible</i>	Belén Moreno Hurtado	belen_mh2@hotmail.com

Topics

Country specific approach: Russia / Ukraine / Moldova / Belarus

Among the discussions of the following 6 months were: "Country specific approach: Russia" (about inclusion of Eastern-European countries in European society) and "VFAs implementation in European countries" (to find out how European countries are implementing VFAs and eliminate the differences).

Analysis of VFA Implementation

We are running a project that is called "VFA initiative", which means that we asked certain locals in certain countries (East of Europe) to write down their experience(s) with foreign missions when dealing with visas. We are still collecting all experience - in order to raise awareness - and discussing within the working group. Burak and Thomas also applied to organize a workshop about youth mobility during the AGORA-Enschede. They would use these stories of people who had visa difficulties for their simulation workshop.

Activities

Articles

Visa Freedom Working Group is taking part in contribution for AEGEE's online magazine "AEGEEan". Every month you can find there new article in the section "Working Groups". [Take a look.](#)

Visa-Responsible Network

We are searching for contacts all over AEGEE, in order to create a functional network of visa-responsible people (at least one per country), in order to cooperate and help in the field of visa issues that would be shared with SUCT and Statutory locals. Do you want to [join](#) or [contact](#) us ? The target audience are the AEGEE members who have visa problems when they go to Schengen Area and the AEGEE members from Schengen Area who are responsible and sensitive about the opportunities of other AEGEE people.

Booklet project

We developed a "Booklet project" in cooperation with other AEGEE members, in order to facilitate the granting of visa to AEGEE people, through sensitization of the embassies of Schengen countries in the target countries to the opportunities of AEGEE events for visa applicants. We want to create and print a catchy info booklet about AEGEE and which underlines how AEGEE fosters "Schengen country values" like democracy, human rights, cultural exchange, active citizenship, youth participation and distribute this booklet in the respective translation to the embassies of at least Germany, Netherlands, Spain, France, Italy, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and Poland, plus create postcards which Agora- and SU participants with visas send to the embassies which issued the visa.

Online visa advisor on Facebook

"Any VISA problem? Let's find solutions!" ([online advisor on Facebook](#)) - was created by VFWG in order to get closer to all members of AEGEE who ever had a problem concerning VISA issuing and they couldn't end up attending an event or exchange, which is the worst thing that can happen.

This forum is the perfect place to share all the doubts about Invitation Letters, VISA petitions, etc etc etc... If you have any question, don't hesitate to ask! It would be essential to get to know exactly what you, AEGEE people, want to know about visa procedures! If you have some bad experience, we would like to hear it and possibly learn from it, in order to avoid the same situation.

Visa preparations for statutory locals

Before Agora Enschede 2012 we want to ensure smooth visa-period for all the "visa" participants - visa-responsible of Agora Skopje was contacted and asked for feedback (to get more knowledge of ILs preparations), extension of the visa period before the Statutory local was communicated with the Chair Team and local organizers and help is offered to anyone who will need it from the side of VFWG.

Collaborations

ESN + IFISO

We would like to closely cooperate with our partners Erasmus Student Network and IFISO in Europe and that is why we created an official Letter of Cooperation to convince these two organizations to cooperate with us and suggested to establish the collaboration via Letters of Intent. We want to create a database of contacts from each European country and share with ESN and IFISO our knowledge about Europe in exchange with wilder parties and better events.

Eastern Partnership Project of AEGEE-Europe

We are looking forward to our cooperation on issues and activities that we have in common!

SUCT

Visa Freedom Working group was involved in preparation of the AEGEE Summer Universities 2012 booklet. Article about visa procedures and recommendations was directed not only to "visa" participants but also to organizers. Further information can be found also on the AEGEE Summer Universities 2012 webpage.

AEGEE-Lviv

Event of VFWG and AEGEE-Lviv will be organized as a pre-event of the Autumn Agora Budapest on the topic "Learn to swim in the pool of Visa Experts!" More info soon !

Improvements

Our logo changed 7 months ago

We created the new logo for Visa Freedom Working group on the topic: "Freedom of movement for the place we call home." With the external help of Deniz Özhan from AEGEE-Izmir, we want to make VFWG fresh and interesting again! Check also our new webpage design !! We want to make our webpage look as good as possible, colorful and full of interesting and useful information.

Knowledge Transfer document and new HR strategy

Our new HR responsible successfully implemented new application form and system for the future members of VFWG and provides a knowledge transfer, in order to involve the new members immediately in the activities of the working group.

PR strategy

PowerPoint presentation about VFWG and WGs Newsletters were shared by the Network and especially locals involved in [Summer University project](#). Moreover, we want to assure that every member of AEGEE will know about the possibility to download our "super-tuned" [Invitation Letter with a Manual for writing](#).

Attendance

Fall Agora Skopje 2011

- **Presentation:** the Progress Report was presented on the stage with some new members of VFWG.
- **Fair:** we prepared our table for the **AEGEE Fair** !! Games, information, maps, videos – all of this you could have found at our table ! Thanks to the members of VFWG who took part in it and prepared the stand - Raphael, Thomas, Basia, Burak. Thank you guys, you really did a great job!
- **WorkShop:** we prepared a workshop that was on the topic "Visa obstacles of young volunteers" about visa issues, visa policies, invitation letters, visa facilitation agreements etc. and was led by Jana (speaker) and Olga.
- **Proposals:** Visa Freedom Working Group helped with the creation of a proposal for Agora Skopje that would not only simplify the criteria for Working Groups stated in the CIA, but also re-structure the WGs of AEGEE to attract more members to become active

on the European level. The proposal was presented during one of the Prytania by the [Speaker of VFWG](#) and AEGEE Academy.

- "Working Groups reform" was approved by Agora, which means that the rules and criteria of the WGs changed a bit and we should be able to read the latest version of it as soon as the CD releases it;
- "Voting right of envoys" was not approved by Agora, which means that still the envoys of VFWG will not be able to give an indicative vote during prytania.
- **Criteria fulfilled:** we managed to fulfill 9 criteria from 10, which is a great progress, if we consider the fact that in Alicante we managed 2 out of 10. Thanks to everyone who is active in this working group, as without you we would not be able get here!
- **Video:** again we prepared a video for the closing plenary, which had again a great success ! You can watch the video [here](#) !!

NWM Tbilisi

During the Network Meeting in Tbilisi our member Olga Iatsyna made a workshop on the topic of visa facilitations and problems that we should be aware of on our way around Europe. Thank you, Olga!

LTC of AEGEE-Eskişehir

Stand of Visa Freedom Working Group appeared during the LTC in Eskişehir under the lead of Burak Topaloglu. He provided all the participants with useful information and gave them advices and recommendations concerning their future "visa struggles". Thank you, Burak!

EBM Izmir 2012

- **Fair:** we prepared our table again for the AEGEE Fair !! Games, information, maps, posters, videos – all of this you could have found at our table ! Thank you Belén and Burak!
- **Visa Facilitation Action Meeting:** members of VFWG also took part in the development of the Action Agenda of AEGEE - namely, in the Action Meetings that were directed to visa issues and mobility problems. They were very successful and contributed lively to the discussion and activities development.

This is the progress of the Visa Freedom Working Group of "our AEGEE". In case of any questions or comments, please, do not hesitate to contact us anytime.