



European NEWS Flash Youth

N.3

Editor's Note

Dear All!!

As you may be aware, the next newsletter of the EFAy was due out next month, but members of the Bureau thought that it would be a good idea to release a 'Special Edition' issue, focusing solely on the General Assembly. In this way, those members of the EFAy who were unable to attend the GA, can at least peruse something a little more readable than the Minutes of the meeting to find out a little more of what went on [my thoughts]!

During the GA, Nelly Maes (President of the EFAy) and Bernat Joan (Catalan MEP) attended for part of the time and made short addresses to the assembled delegates. Both Nelly and Bernat pointed out that the EFAy is the future of the EFA and that each group is committed to campaigning for greater justice and representation in Europe. But for me, Bernat touched on an issue that I believe is fundamentally important to members of the EFAy and young people in general. Bernat argued that as young people we are often more radical, because we are less afraid of going to



Nelly Maes and Bernat Joan at the GA

the root of the matter and are consequently unaware that we are tackling radical issues at all. This reminded me of the Irish man Thomas MacDonagh who told the literary men of action in the Easter Rising in Ireland in 1916 that, 'a man who is a mere author is nothing...I am going to live things that I have before imagined'. This I think is a lesson from which we could all learn and try to apply in every aspect of our lives. If we can imagine it, then we can make it possible. The future of Europe is in the hands of young people and if the EFAy intend to help shape it we must aim to take a radical stance, but most importantly, we must act!

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The next issue of the EFAy newsletter will be released by the end of next month. If you would like to contribute, please forward your articles and news items to Eva Bidania at efa-youth@europarl.europa.eu (note email change)

I look forward to hearing from you.
Rhisart Tal-e-bot
28.05.06



Education and Culture

European Commission Grant –First for EFAy

Youth

The EFAy was awarded a 6690 Euro grant by the European Commission (EC) for 2006–7, which is the first grant of its kind that the group has obtained. The grant is for the exclusive use of the EFAy office running costs.

Some background stuff

According to the EC's grant funding criteria a youth group has to be officially registered for one year or more before it is eligible to apply for a grant. However, this was the third consecutive year that the EFAy had applied for a grant and for the last two years, for different reasons, the group were denied the financial support of the EC. This time we were only a few days short of the deadline, which was newly introduced after the EFAy made the grant application. If the criteria had been the same as previous years, then the EFAy would have been eligible for a grant.

Due to the persistent complaints of Eva Bidania, who highlighted the unfairness of such a ruling, the EC finally caved in and gave us the grant. It turned out that the grant was above average for an organisation like ours who was applying for the first time. This also hopefully means that next year we will get an even bigger grant – well done to those involved!!

Ukrainians: Letter of Apology

The EFAy delegation from the state of the Ukraine was prevented from attending the General Assembly this year, because the Belgium Government refused to grant them a visa. Instead the *Independent Youth Association for Human Rights* had to send a letter of apology to fellow delegates wishing them a successful AGM and stay in Brussels.

Editor's Comment :

It was deeply disappointing to many of the delegates at this years EFAy GA to hear that the Ukrainian delegates were not permitted to travel to Brussels. It is often difficult for young people in the west of Europe to understand that many of their fellow Europeans still have travel restrictions imposed on them through no

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fault of their own. This is especially sad when those people who are affected by such rulings are themselves young people involved in cultural and political activities at a European level.

If Europe is to be *United in Diversity* or have any sort of unity at all, those people who are currently outside the borders of the EU also need to be included, *despite* their citizenship. If young people are prevented from sharing and participating in the diversity of the continent to which they belong, simply because they have the wrong passport, they may be tempted to turn their backs on a democratic Europe of the future and look elsewhere for support and understanding.



Some delegates at the GA

'Breaking Visa Barrier' Online Petition

A petition is currently being circulated on the Internet, that aims to put an end to travel visa fees for young people involved in cultural education. The petition calls to:

- *Introduce a special type of visa for young people involved in international youth activities*
- *Abolish fees for visas for the ones involved in cultural, educational and civil society activities*
- *Establish transparent Europe-wide common criteria for visas for young people involved in youth work*
- *Ensure coherent regulations in the field of migration and youth policy, in favor of youth policy*
- *Enable easy and transparent registration procedures for both short- and long-term volunteers and employees in NGYOs.*
- *Develop and implement other policies to enhance the mobility of young people in the wider European area in order to help building a sustainable European civil society based on democratic principles, inclusion, openness, knowledge and cultural exchange.*

The petition can be found at <http://www.petitiononline.com/aegeeyfj/petition.html>. It would be great if many of us could add our names in support of this campaign, so that at the next EFAY GA, the Ukrainian delegation will be in attendance:

An extract from the letter sent by the Ukrainians makes clear how these young people feel:

"In our opinion the European Union is now experiencing certain problems. European politics is not giving enough attention to the needs of the youth, even though young people are the most progressive part of a society. That's why we are obliged to defend our rights and interests actively. Only together will we be able to achieve equality in rights and a comfortable and stable life for all European citizens..."

[...] We are all different, we have different traditions and mentalities and it is beautiful. Our cultures and identities do not separate us, but complement and enriches us.

Association and cooperation is the only way to achieve our aims and objectives and the EFAY is a good example of such association and cooperation."

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Activities.

Süd Tyrol – Fascist relics

At the beginning of May, Junge Union organised a series of protests against Italian fascist monuments, plaques and reliefs that can still be seen throughout South Tyrol, marking the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini.



The protests took the form of publicity stunts, a country-wide debate and a poster campaign.

Speaking about the campaign Sven Knoll, the Youth- Coordinator of the Junge Union and member of the EFAY bureau, commented:

"Italy has had more than 60 years to remove these shameful monuments. Our patience is now at an end. We South Tyroleans don't want to live with these daily reminders, which cause us great offence. We demand their immediate removal by the Italian authorities."

A website has also been created citing the locations of each of the monuments, including a short report about the history and meaning of each and can be found at www.faschistische-relikte.bz.st Follow the link for the Junge Union press release:

<http://www.efayouth.org/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=5&cntnt01returnid=15>



Europe Day 2006

On the 9th May press conferences were organised across Europe in an attempt to draw media attention to the EFAY vision of the future of Europe.

The press conferences were held simultaneously to show solidarity between each of the groups that took part and involved young people from Cornwall, Catalunya, Basque Country, Brittany, Flanders, Moravia, Südtirol, Silesia, Macedonia, and Ukraine, among others.

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In addition, at each conference the same statement was read out, focusing not only on the aims and ideology behind the EFAy, but also calling on the EU to work more closely with the peoples of those states not currently members of the Union. This was to draw attention to the EFAy belief that the rights of people come before the furtherance of economic objectives, as could be seen recently in the EU's interest in negotiating a trade deal with Turkmenistan for its gas reserves, despite its appalling human rights record.

The EFAy press statement can be found by following the link:

<http://www.efayouth.org/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=9&cntnt01returnid=15>



The press conference in Bilbao.

Other issues.

Membership

At this years GA Chobentú Jóvenes de CHA (from Arragon) were voted to become full members of the EFAy after being observers for one year – **CONGRATULATIONS!!**

The EFAy rules state that all those who are eligible must first be Observers for at least one year before becoming full members.



Website

The new EFAy website was launched at this years GA. The long overdue site was created by Gazte Abertzaleak (from the Basque Country) and is designed so that all representative members have access to it. This means that each member organisation of EFAy is able to upload their press releases, activities or any other bits and pieces of information that may be interesting for others to read. The site can be found at www.efayouth.org and if your group does not already have its own password, get in touch with Lander de Bilbao at ldebilbao@gmail.com

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Kurds from Turkey

The following article was written by Guan Schaiko, a member of SPIRIT, the Flemish political youth section of PREGO. At the GA, Guan spoke about the plight of the Kurdish people living in the state of Turkey and the hardships and injustices they endure on a daily basis at the hands of the Turkish authorities. In the next newsletter Guan will write further about this issue.

Turks-Koerdistan

Koerdistan is een regio in het Midden-Oosten dat zich hoofdzakelijk uitstrekt over Turkijë, Iran, Irak en Syrië. Daarnaast zijn er ook nog kleine Koeridische minderheden in de voormalige Sovjet-Unie, zoals Georgië en Armenië. Officiële tellingen zijn er nooit geweest, maar hun aantal wordt geschat op 30-35 miljoen mensen. Daarmee zijn de Koerden na de Arabieren en Perzen, de grootste etnische groep in het Midden-Oosten. Het probleem is echter dat ze in elk land een minderheid vormen, met discriminaties en het ontkennen van hun bestaan als gevolg. In Turkije bevindt zich de grootste groep van Koerden, rond de 20 000 000 mensen, wat neerkomt op meer dan 1/4^{de} van de Turkse bevolking. De grootste Koeridische stad is Diyarbakir in het Zuid-Oosten van het land.

Tot kort voor er gesprekken werden gestart met de Europese Unie over een mogelijke toetreding, ontkende de Turkse overheid het bestaan van de Koerden. Volgens hen waren het 'berg-Turken'. Maar de Koerden behoren tot een totaal andere etnische groep (Indo-Europeanen), met een eigen taal, eigen geschiedenis en eigen cultuur. De politiek van de Turkse regering bestond, zoals in andere autoritaire regimes, in een doorgedreven assimilatie. Het Koeridisch werd afgedaan als een 'dialect' en was dan ook verboden om te spreken. Dit verbod uitte zich onder meer in een censuur op Koeridische muziek, literatuur en ook Koeridisch onderwijs bestond niet. Newroz, voor de Koerden hun belangrijkste feestdag, werd omgevormd tot 'Nationale Moedertjesdag' en kreeg de naam Nevroz. Ook economisch werden de Koeridische gebieden achteruit gesteld: de armoede en analfabetisme liggen er stukken hoger dan in het Turkse gedeelte van Turkije.

Midden jaren '80 begon de Koeridische ArbeidersBeweging (PKK) gewapenderhand een offensief tegen het Turkse leger. Het antwoord van de Turkse overheid was keihard: het leger bezette met militair geweld Koeridische gebieden en bij de strijd vielen meer dan 30000 doden. Het tragisch hoogtepunt van dit gebeuren was het platbranden van 3000 Koeridische dorpen eind jaren '80 op verdenking van samenwerking met de PKK. Honderdduizenden mensen vluchtten de bergen in en werden daar geconfronteerd met hun lotgenoten uit Iraaks-Koerdistan die op de vlucht waren geslagen voor de bloedorstige hand van Saddam Hoessein.



Members of the EFAY Bureau listening to Guan Schaiko at the GA

Pas in 1998 kwam er een soort bestand tussen de rebellen en Turkse overheid. Maar doordat de situatie van de Koerden ongewijzigd bleef, is de strijd de laatste jaren weer opgelaaid. Inderdaad, de situatie op het veld is nog niet veel veranderd. Hoewel de Turkse regering naar aanleiding van de toetredingsgesprekken veel beloftes en hervormingen aankondigde, blijkt er maar weinig van te zijn gerealiseerd.

De Koeridische taal wordt erkend. Dit betekent dat de Koerden recht hebben op een half uurtje televisie in hun eigen taal, mits ondertiteling in het Turks. Officieel is het ook toegelaten Koeridisch onderwijs aan te bieden, maar aangezien dit niet centraal wordt georganiseerd en de mensen op zichzelf aangewezen zijn, komt daar in de veelal economische achteruit gestelde gebieden niets van in huis.

Partijen die opkomen voor een meer zelfstandig Koerdistan worden verboden, omdat ze 'separatistisch' zouden zijn. Een nationale kiesdrempel maakt het voor de partijen ook moeilijk om door te breken. De gebieden worden nog steeds centraal bestuurd, met in ieder dorp een Turkse dorpswachter die de overheid melding maakt van 'onvaderlandslievend gedrag'.

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Er is dus nog veel werk aan de winkel voor Turkije. Een echte democratische Staat, waarin de macht van het leger wordt teruggeschroefd en de rechterlijke macht écht onafhankelijk kan functioneren, is niet enkel goed voor de Koerden, maar ook voor de Turkse bevolking zelf.

Of zoals Nelly Maes (EVA-voorzitster) het zo mooi zegt: de weg van Ankara naar Brussel loopt via Diyarbakir!

Visit to Gent and Diksmude.



Two days after the EFA General Assembly, on Saturday the 13th, a trip to the Flemish medieval city of Gent was organised for the EFA (y) delegates.

At 9 in the morning we took the bus at the Justice Palace square. We arrived in Gent at 11:00 and where the Spirit Council representative was waiting for us in the in the marvellous Town Hall. After his speech and a cocktail we made a tour of the whole building, before going on to visit the rest of the city.

The EFA group (around 30 people) was divided in two linguistic groups (English and German) and we visited the old city for about one and a half hours. After that we had free time in which to have lunch and walk around until 1500.

At that time we all meet up again to go to the Diksmude, the Flemish Museum for Peace. This museum has become in a symbol of Peace in Belgium.

We all agreed that the visit was impressive. We watched a gruelling film about the realities of war and its consequences and then we visited the museum from the very top of the building (the 22nd floor!!!).

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After a brief guided tour of the museum - its importance, its work, and its own history - we descended floor by floor, through the different expositions, making a chronological and thematic virtual tour of the 1st World War.

At the climax of the tour we were offered a delicious cocktail while several concerts, to promote peace, were taking place in a field close to the museum.

No more war!

Eva Bidania
EFAy Coordinator

Diksmude



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Next Bureau meeting?

Members of the EFAy still have until 10th June to propose that the next Bureau meeting, which is due to take place in September 2006, be held in their nation or region. Unlike in previous years all members of the EFAy can offer to play host to a Bureau meeting, which is no longer limited to those regions/nations represented on the Bureau. Bureau meetings take place twice a year and all costs of Bureau members are incurred by the EFA, including travel and accommodation.

A final decision will be made on the 10th June about where the Bureau meeting will be held.



Bureau Members before the GA

End note:

Further Issues

Of course other issues were discussed at the General Assembly, but if you want further information please see the Minutes of the Meeting, the website or wait until the next EFAy Newsletter to be issued next month.

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