Best summer school

For the first time, the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) organised a summer school for its members. ESN wanted to provide training on the topics that concern the organisation as well as the organisation should be concerned about. The world around ESN is constantly evolving. Educational systems are changing and so does accessibility to (international) education. Students are looking more and more what's in it for them while conducting extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, it goes without saying that international cooperation in general becomes more and more important while keeping the local reality in mind.

An application for funding of the European Youth Foundation had been made and successfully received. Detailed plans and schedules had been set up, accommodation had been found and trainers arranged. In short, the local team in Sofia with support of Elena of Skopje, Claudio of Porto and the former president of the International Board Matthias Fenner arranged everything to make the stay a successful and inspiring learning experience as possible.

It was a wonderful week in Sofia. The feeling before, during and after the summer school is hard to be described to people who were not there. I will not try to do it, I will simply give you some rough data instead.

**BEST** or Bulgaria Education Summer Training

**Dates** – 30.07.2009 – 05.08.2009

**Place** – Sofia

**Participants** – 50 from all ESN countries

**Host** – ESN Sofia University and ESN New Bulgarian University

**Partners** – The European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe (main partner), Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe (CEETRUST), Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, YMCA Plovdiv, the European Commission in Bulgaria

**Main objectives:**

·         to understand different realities of education in Europe

* to identify and share the best practices how to increase the quality and accessibility to education both formal and non-formal
* the creation of recommendations related to education, youth empowerment and inclusion towards policy-makers and young people
* to empower the participants in order to train other students in their country about the right to education
* to identify and highlight the benefits of (student) volunteering towards society; resulting in providing training and tools to the participants for efficient and effective volunteering

**Means**: Formal and non-formal ways of training will be provided. Lectures about the right to education, youth empowerment and inclusion will alternate with workshops and structured group discussions to share experiences and find creative solutions to obstacles.

**Topics and trainers:**

* Formal education and mobility by Madara Apsalone (ESN)
* Mobility in Europe and beyond by Jakob Smets (ESN)
* How to be international by Mariya Handzhiyska
* Non-formal education / How to train others / Presentation techniques by Maria Nomikou (pool of trainers European Youth Foundation)
* Volunteer motivation / Volunteer management by Dejan Acanski (pool of trainers European Youth Foundation)
* Project Management by Dejan Acanski (pool of trainers European Youth Foundation) and Raina Gavrilova (CEETRUST)

**Additions to the program** – a trip to Plovdiv and meeting with YMCA Plovdiv; movie night – Geogui and the butterflies.

O**ff-the-program** – tons of enthusiasm and inspiration for everyone involved!!! BEST was a unique experience and a big benefit for the network! Organizing Committee BEST 2009 hopes that there will be a lot more summer schools that will help strengthen ESN and share the knowledge.

BEST turned to be the perfect name, since for everyone involved this was the “best” week of our lives!