



AEGEE-Europe European Students' Forum

AEGEE-Europe denounces the attack to Youth Rights as the the Spanish Youth Council will be suppressed today

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AEGEE-Europe, a European student organization present in 19 Spanish cities, claims that the closure of the Spanish Youth Council aggravates the vulnerability of young people in Spain and is a violation of the Constitutional right of youth to be allowed to participate in the political, social, economic and cultural decisions. The Spanish Cabinet of Ministers will approve this closure today in a pack of austerity measures in public administration, without consulting the views of young people.

The Spanish Youth Council (CJE) is in the list of organizations that the Spanish Minister Cabinet will close or relocate on Friday June 21, 2013 as proposed by the Commission for the Reform of Public Administration, according to news published by the newspaper El Pais yesterday. The Spanish Youth Council is the highest representative body of youth in the country, integrating the voice of all sectors of youth and also offering them endless opportunities for training, mobility, cooperation and self-development. It is an example of pluralism because it represents all ideologies, and a school of democracy more necessary than ever right now.

The voice of the Spanish youth in Europe

The Spanish Youth Council is the Spanish representative in the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the representation of European Youth to the European Institutions. The European Youth Forum has played a key role in the development of policies to support youth, as the recently approved Youth Guarantee Scheme (proposed by the European Commission), which is a critical tool in the fight against youth unemployment. The Youth Guarantee will bring to Spain 2 billion Euros of European funds to fight against youth Unemployment. (See photo)



1Ricardo Ibarra, President of the Spanish Youth Council, with László Andor European Commissioner for Employment, presenting the Youth Guarantee



A loss of constitutional rights

The closing of the Spanish Youth Council is a direct attack on the right of young people to participate freely and effectively in the political, social, economic and cultural decisions. Luis Alvarado Martinez, President of AEGEE-Europe, states that "instead of promoting this right as required by Article 48 of the Spanish Constitution, this decision of the Spanish Government goes in the opposite direction. In a time when the European message focuses on supporting youth, and when the role of associations and volunteering as a platform for learning and development of skills key to finding a job is being recognized more than ever, this decision makes no sense.", unless the objective is to silence one of the most critical voices against some decisions of the Spanish government. In a democracy, protecting the diversity of opinions should be a priority, and budget adjustments should not be an excuse to silence critical sectors.

A chain reaction is feared

This measure also threatens Youth Councils at local and regional levels, engaged in the same objective of supporting youth participation in municipalities and regions. Recently the Youth Councils have been shut down in several municipalities, and they have been suppressed in the regions of Madrid and Cantabria.

Youth is one of the groups more severely in Europe during this crisis. The situation in Spain is even worse: youth unemployment rate exceeds 56%, cuts in education and research, the uncertain future of the retirement system... Spanish young people get bad news every day, and in many cases they are forced to return to live with their families or to start a new life abroad, where opportunities are not as scarce as in their own country. This new attack on youth rights further blackens their future and deprives them of their legitimate interlocutor with the Government.

AEGEE-Europe and the Spanish Youth Council

AEGEE-Europe collaborates with the Spanish Youth Council in several initiatives within the European Youth Forum. The Spanish Youth Council is recognized in Europe as a model for its plurality, its record of achievements and its professionalism. Closing it would be an attack on democracy; and its transformation into a new entity, if it is really so much needed, should never be adopted without a process of reflection in which the youth represented in the Spanish Youth Council has the opportunity to decide which model they want.

AEGEE-Europe was born 27 years ago with the vision of creating a unified Europe, based on democracy and a respect for human rights, bringing together students with different cultural backgrounds. Today, AEGEE is Europe's largest interdisciplinary youth organization: 40 countries, 200 cities, 13 000 friends. This network provides the ideal platform for young volunteers to work together on cross-border activities such as international conferences, seminars, exchanges, training courses and case study trips. In line with the challenges young people are currently facing in Europe, AEGEE's work is focused on three main areas: promotion of youth participation, development of European relations with its neighbors and the inclusion of minorities.



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The Spanish Youth Council is a platform involving youth organizations and regional youth councils; it is a platform ideologically plural where youth decides what actions can be set, and where they can network with other organizations. It is a platform based on voluntary work which establishes action plans based on social, political and economic factors that affect young people. The Spanish Youth Council provides training to its members in a variety of themes: sustainability, human rights, education, equal opportunity, leadership, empowerment... It is a platform that encourages youth participation and hosts all youth associations without distinction. It supports plural democratic participation as a mean to exercise full citizenship in society, social commitment, equal opportunities, dialogue and respect for diversity in its broadest sense.

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