



AEGEE Toolkit

Non Formal Education



INDEX

1. Non Formal Education: What are we talking about?	3
2. But what do we in AEGEE do exactly and how does it affects me?	4
3. AEGEE's work to enhance validation and recognition of Non Formal Education	6
3.1 How do we reinforce the quality if the NFE we provide?	7
3.2 How do we reinforce the awareness of NFE providers (project team members, Academy, etc.)?	8
3.3 How do we reinforce the awareness learners (AEGEE members)?	8

1. Non Formal Education: What are we talking about?

In AEGEE, you will hear often talking about Non Formal Education and its importance for our network. But what do we really understand by Non Formal Education?

Several definitions of NFE exist, set by the European Institutions (European Commission - EC, Council of Europe - CoE), International Organisations such as UNESCO and Youth Platforms, such as the European Youth Forum.

The one of the European Youth Forum is the one which best describes our situation:

Non Formal Education is an organised educational process which takes place alongside mainstream systems of education and training, and does not typically lead to certification. Individuals participate on a voluntary basis and as a result, the individual takes an active role in the learning process.

Important to stress is that NFE

- a) is a learning process
- b) happens outside the formal educational system (school, high school, University etc)
- c) involves the learner in a very dynamic and horizontal way (this means that learner and the trainer have the same legitimacy)
- d) enables him/her to develop in terms of knowledge (information, hard facts...), skills (knowhow), and attitudes (behaviours).

NFE becomes a clearer concept if we compare it with other forms of education:

Formal Education refers to the education framework which we regularly follow as individuals going from school to universities. The involvement and participation of young people is mandatory (the age varies according to the countries), the method and content used by the teachers/schools is defined and elaborated on national level by the governments (in most of the Member States). This means in reality it often comes down to a teacher sharing his/her knowledge and the students taking notes. This learning context is more controlled by structures and therefore the space to participate critically is limited.

Informal Learning is knowledge and competences that people gain in a non-structured context. It can happen everywhere and anytime (reading a book you enhance your understanding about a specific situation, talking with friends you find out about the culture of one specific country, etc.) but within youth organisations for example, informal learning happens even more often, due to the high interaction among the members. Informal Learning, in contrary to Non Formal and Formal Education, has not

been planned and happens 'naturally', it doesn't happen conscientiously but more as a side effect of the activity we are doing,

Non Formal Education is a very important concept for our association, and it actually refers to several levels of understanding:

- First of all, NFE is a learning process which happens when people participate voluntarily in activities, trainings, workshops, and which enables them to develop their values, soft skills and competencies complementary to the ones developed in the framework of formal education.
- NFE is also the name given to the method which is used, namely putting the learners' need in the centre, and giving him or her space and opportunity to discover and learn by having a pro-active attitude and leading his/her own learning process. In Non Formal Education, the ideas of the participants are valued and are at the centre.
- Last but not least, NFE also refers to a political process of validation and certification of learning outcomes and competences which are acquired outside the Formal Educational system.

2. But what do we in AEGEE do exactly and how does it affect me?

Non Formal Education and Informal Learning are part of the everyday life of our Network, but we are not always aware of it.

Fresh members start participating already at local level in so called LTCs - Local Training Courses, while at European level, European Schools (AEGEE branded training) and other training courses give AEGEE members opportunities to acquire competencies in different fields. Truly, Non Formal Education is everywhere in AEGEE – workshops and training sessions during Agora and European Boards meeting are just an example.

Below, you can find some example, extracted from AEGEE reality:

	NFE	Informal Learning
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning objectives • planned • there is a methodology defined • happens within a structure • learning is intentional • provided by somebody, for somebody else 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not planned • no specific methodology • not intentional
Examples in AEGEE's context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Courses (European School, Regional Training Courses, Local Training Courses, NWMs) • Workshops and thematic sessions • Political events (Structured Dialogue, EBM) • Events planned by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ projects/WGs ▪ Policy Officers ▪ Youth Leaders • Positions in AEGEE (board on Local level and all European level positions) <p>The method used in all these activities is Non Formal Education. There are trainers which have prepared a program in order to share specific knowledge/skills/ attitudes with the participants, taking into account the learning objectives and intentions of the project. In case of the positions, objectives, tasks and a framework is provided by predecessors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informal networking (people you meet, social skills..) • intercultural awareness (languages, cultures, etc.) acquired through experiences • coffee breaks and social time <p>In those context, AEGEE members may learn a lot, but we cannot really say that the learning has been planned, nor that there were specific objectives set for one person to acquire a specific learning. For this reason, it is called informal learning.</p>

In order to be a bit more specific, and to check the different criteria of both Non Formal and Informal learning, we can take an example of each context:

Non Formal Education:

Each project has objectives that they want to reach, and in order to get there, they usually organise events or activities across the network. When they organise one event in a specific city, they do it with a **learning intention behind**. There will be a Non Formal Education process because they have set learning objectives for the participants. Moreover, they will use different **methods that are called Non Formal**, because they do not stick with the usual education format, of “teaching” students. Usually, AEGEE workshops are interactive, they put the learner in the centre of the process, and s/he is the one who decides how much s/he wants to learn, according to his/her involvement. There will be practical activities, simulations, pedagogical games, case studies, etc., enabling the members to express their views, to experience something, to be confronted to a specific situation, which will have an impact on the participant.

Informal Learning happens also everywhere within AEGEE, even more often. For example, in AEGEE, we can consider that members increase their language skills. Not because we have offered language courses, but because it happens naturally, because we get in touch young people from different countries, who therefore have to use a common language.

3. AEGEE's work to enhance validation and recognition of Non Formal Education

Too often, beneficiaries of NFE processes (meaning, participants) are not aware of the influence it has on them. Currently, Formal Education and curricula is considered as the unique “reliable knowledge provider”, and the learning which has been acquired in other settings is not valued enough.

For this reason, AEGEE strives for a better recognition of Non Formal Education on 4 levels:

Political recognition: This refers to the political will to recognize and support Non Formal Learning/Education through legislation, its inclusion in Political strategies and the involvement of its providers in these strategies (through financial support, law or political positions, for example).

Institutional recognition: This refers to institutionalisation of Non Formal Education as one of the learning pathways. More concretely, institutional recognition aims at the validation of the learning outcomes issuing certificates or diplomas which recognise the achievements of an individual.

Social recognition: This refers to the understanding and awareness of the social players regarding the fact that learning can happen in different settings, and thus, acknowledge the value of competences acquired from non-formal learning programs and the work done within the initiatives promoted by them, including the value of the organisations providing this work.

Self-recognition: This refers to the self-awareness of the beneficiaries of Non Formal Education.

Externally, AEGEE works together with other relevant stakeholders, such as the European Youth Forum (YFJ) and the EUCIS-LLL (Platform for Life Long Learning Organisations).

In this level, we

- monitor the policy development, especially on European level, in order to understand what is the current political will, and to advocate for a better recognition of NFE
- attend relevant advocacy events or experts' meeting gathering other civil society organisation who have the same will to see a better recognition of NFE (for example, expert's group on NFE Recognition)
- use the policy paper of YFJ on Non Formal Education and implementing a better quality assurance with AEGEE:

<http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2013/12/Policy-Paper-Role-of-NGO-0618-03.pdf>

Internally, AEGEE has developed a strategy in order to:

- reinforce the quality of the Non Formal Education we provide
- reinforce the awareness of the NFE providers (project members, Academy, etc.)
- reinforce the self-awareness of the learners (members)

3.1 How do we reinforce the quality if the NFE we provide?

→ Implement the Quality Assurance Framework of the European Youth Forum within AEGEE in order to increase the quality of the NFE Activities that we organise (events and trainings).

For this, we will:

- transform the Events Committee into a Quality Assessment Committee, which will be in charge to implement the Quality Indicators for Non Formal Education
- train the Academy to use the Quality Indicators for the Training Courses

→ Work with the Academy to make it a quality NFE provider

The Academy is doing a great job for a long time in AEGEE. As a structure, it currently lacks clarity in defining what is a trainer for AEGEE, who can be a trainer, what are the competencies of our trainers, how can we certify our trainers, how to give coherency in

all the Training Courses organised, and how to ensure quality of the trainings we provide.

We want to reinforce the quality and the role of the Academy as a Non Formal Learning provider.

3.2 How do we reinforce the awareness of NFE providers (project team members, Academy, etc.)?

→ Raise the awareness of the NFIL (Non Formal Education/Informal Learning) "providers"

Who are those "providers"? Trainers of Academy, Organisers of events planned (youth leaders, project managers/project responsibilities, Policy officers...),

How?

- **Provide workshops** on the topic of NFIL in AEGEE during Agoras, NWMs, events, being as specific as possible, for example, Non Formal Education and Summer Universities, or How to use Non Formal Education in your local activities etc...
- Develop the **learning objectives of the Summer Universities** and make organisers of SUs aware of the learning potential of the SUs. **Use the SUPS** in order to establish this learning dimension in the SUs. Work with SUCT. In order to raise awareness of the participants, we need to introduce the impact measurement within the SU, so participants can realise what they have learned during the process.

3.3 How do we reinforce the awareness learners (AEGEE members)?

→ Reinforce the Non Formal Education learning process of active members in AEGEE and create a career path within AEGEE for the members

When one member gets responsibilities in the organisation, there is a learning process which enables him/her to develop knowledge, competences and attitudes. Especially for members taking up positions in a local board or on European level (Commission, Committee, WG or project team, CD, etc.), there is a Non Formal Learning process happening.

However, the learning intention behind every position, even though existing, is not written anywhere. This is why there is a need to map out the attitudes, skills and competences that one should/can acquire by going into those positions, and thus, reinforce the NFE impact of our organisation.

As an outcome, we will design a clear A.S.K (attitudes, Skills and Knowledge) path for all the board positions.

This will help to structure and shed light on one of the aspect of Non Formal Education in AEGEE, but it will also make the positions more attractive for the members (Human Resources perspective).

→ **Raise the self-awareness of the impact of NFE and Informal Learning on the members**

We will have to define and probably make a distinction between active members (who have experienced NFIL in AEGEE) and participants/more passive members.

How?

Create a self-assessment tool (online tool) for members to be able to identify the competencies, attitudes and knowledge that they have acquired in AEGEE. The tool will enable the AEGEE members to go through different steps:

1. Identification: finding out which are the competences they think they have developed
2. Documentation: gathering pictures, documents, references which can document these experiences
3. Assessment: taking a survey to find out to which level of competences they belong
4. Certification: providing the members with a certificate.

This process also aims at helping the AEGEE members to recognise better their competences and how AEGEE has influenced their learning. This way, it can also serve to be able to better formulate their competences in a job environment.