



EUROPEAN STUDENTS' FORUM

AGORA FOR DUMMIES



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2 INTRODUCTION

In this brief guide you will find some vital things all AEGEE members should know when they face an Agora.

We hope you will find it useful. Hopefully it will serve us all to get to the Agora, steady and full of energy to rock Europe!

There are very few other things we could say here, so let's get started!

See you soon!

Chair Team of the Agora

2.1 Facing the unknown: An agora

Well, let's start with the basics, right? The Agora is the most important meeting within AEGEE, it is our member's General Assembly. Just to get the picture, an Agora is like a general shareholders meeting in a big company, a meeting where all shareholders have a look at the state of the company, suggest new ways and choose new representatives to administrate it.

The aim of the Agora, just as the example mentioned above, is to ratify (approve) the work we are all doing as an organisation, the work of those who administrate it directly (the Comité Directeur, or CD), change whatever we don't like and suggest new ideas to be applied in the future.

We hold two Agorae a year – one in spring and another one in autumn.

The Agora is a forum where opinions from all around our network are shared. It is the direct participation of all the antennae in the administration of our organisation.

Without the Agora it would be impossible for AEGEE to develop any kind of activity, so it is very important that all locals join the sessions actively, evaluate and vote accordingly.

Although it is true that all Agorae include a social programme, this is not an event where one should get wasted and die in his/her bed for the next day. It is an event where we are all aware of what it is going on, and we are eager to learn new things, share our best practices and decide on the future of AEGEE.

3 REGISTRATION

3.1 THE ARRIVAL, THE PANIC... THE REGISTRATION

Arriving in an Agora might be difficult as lots of things take place at the same time: suddenly you see people it's been ages you haven't seen, you look around and see a new place... and you register.

There are three registrations that you might want to do as soon as possible.

3.1.1 REGISTRATION WITH THE JURIDICAL COMMISSION

The Juridical Commission is in charge of registering delegates in the system for online voting as well as distributing the election ballots... So **all delegates must register with the JC** in order to be able to vote online for proposals, budgets and reports and receive the ballots for the elections.

3.1.2 REGISTRATION WITH LOCAL ORGANISERS

Local organisers need to know you have arrived in order to cross you out on the participant list. You will all be given a piece of identification that you will have to carry with you all the times, at least if you want to eat, go into the gym and get into the night clubs where parties are held... You will also get a welcome pack with some stuff in it (pens, notebooks, t-shirts, stickers, etc.)

3.1.3 REGISTRATION WITH AEGEE-EUROPE

Joining statutory events is one of the antenna criteria we all have to respect in order to remain an antenna. That is the reason why you will have to register as soon as you arrive in the Agora. During that registration the CD will check that your local has submitted all membership fees. If you like having a confirmation, you can always bring a copy of the banktransfer.

If your local hasn't paid the fee (calculated from the number of members and the fee they pay) you won't get the election ballots and you will have two options, pay it in cash or ask a person at your city to pay it by bank transfer. Not paying the fee implies not to be stated as present in the Agora and therefore failing one of the antenna criteria, besides losing the right to vote in elections of course.

4 STRUCTURE

4.1 THE STRUCTURE OF THE AGORA

Agorae last for three to five days. Those days are really intense as these are the only days where we have members together from almost all locals. So we make the most of every single minute we have together. Let's see what kind of sessions you might see.

4.1.1 PLENARIES

Plenary sessions are the most common ones during Agorae. Their aim is to gather all members of the Agora in order to present reports (financial reports, activity reports, etc.), proposals and candidatures. Voting sessions take place during plenaries, so do not forget your ballot papers every time a voting session is scheduled. During most presentations you will be entitled to ask questions. Always remember that, once you reach the micro, you've got to say your name and your local first so that the Secretary of the Agora includes them in the official minutes.

4.1.2 PRYTANIA

Obviously, discussing all proposals with all members of the Agora during a plenary might be really complicated, and it would take ages. This is the reason why Prytania exist. Prytania are sessions where delegates debate possible changes of our statutes (CIA). There are often different Prytania at the same time to improve the efficiency. The voting results of Prytania are just a recommendation to the Agora. It is the whole Agora who has to approve proposals, not just the delegates attending the prytanium. Singular of Prytania is Prytanium, by the way.

EXAMPLE

- What you doin' mate?
- Just checkin' the list of Prytania. Haven't decided yet which Prytanium I'll be attending.

4.1.3 WORKSHOPS (WS)

At the very same time as the Prytania take place there will be some workshops. They all have a different topic and methodology. They can be on anything. For example, on how to administrate your local, current European affairs, a project within AEGEE, etc. Workshops focus on the thematic and organisational content of AEGEE.

4.1.4 ACTIVITY REPORT SESSIONS

The CD presents their activity report during one of the plenary sessions in front of the whole Agora. The rest of activity reports are presented in two separated sessions. It is important to come to these sessions in order to be aware of all the activities that have been carried out in AEGEE in the last six months.

4.1.5 PROGRESS MEETINGS

During these sessions AEGEE members work on all topics which have a special relevance concerning organisational and administration matters (general budget, policies within the Network Commission, etc.).

4.1.6 AEGEE AND STUDY FAIR

The AEGEE & Study -Fair is an open, free-and-easy session where the different Working Groups, Projects and locals inform about their activities and how any members could join them. It's the best way to start getting involved within European level! Also some universities or external entities might be interested in spreading their programmes during the Agora, so they participate in this open session where all AEGEE members can come and go having a look at their different stands.

5 PARTICIPANTS OF THE AGORA

In the Agora, just like in real life, we all have different role.

5.1 MEMBERS OF THE AGORA

5.1.1 DELEGATES

Delegates are entitled to vote and speak during all different sessions of the Agora. They have been elected to represent their antenna, and so one could expect they went to a prytanium rather than attending a workshop to know all about the proposals they are voting on.

5.1.2 ENVOYS

Envoys have speaking rights during the Agora, but no voting rights. Members from contact-antennae, commissioners, members of projects and members of the Comité Directeur are envoys, for instance.

5.2 NON MEMBERS OF THE AGORA

5.2.1 VISITORS

Visitors have neither speaking rights nor voting rights. So if you are a visitor and you have irresistible impulses to speak you will have to ask the Chairperson of the Agora to allow you. Don't worry, in almost all cases you will be granted those speaking rights!

5.2.2 OBSERVERS

Observers, as visitors, don't have speaking or voting rights. Observers are members of the contacts of AEGEE, associations that are interested in joining the AEGEE family and becoming a contact antenna, but haven't yet signed the CdA.

TIP: Delegates are elected as representative at a meeting of their local. To have the chance of being a delegate you have to appear in the members list that your local submitted before the previous AGORA or be a member of your local board for over three months.

5.3 ACTORS IN THE AGORA

During the Agora you will definitely see some people coming and looking important all the time. Let's see who they are:

5.3.1 CHAIR TEAM

The Chair team chairs both Agorae and EBM. They are in charge of drafting the Agenda (with the CD) and make sure it is carried out during plenary sessions (by controlling times, speaking rights, etc.) You'll always see them sitting on stage. There are four team members: the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary of the Agora and the IT assistant.

5.3.2 CHAIR TEAM JOB SHADOWER

The Chair Team's job shadowers are really interested in getting to know how organising a statutory event is. During the Agora, job shadowers are welcomed within the Chair Team to observe and learn from what they do. They are normally future Chair Team candidates!

5.3.3 JURIDICAL COMMISSION

They are also sitting on stage and make sure everything happening during the Agora meets our statutes and the law. They are those who explain all voting proceedings.

5.3.4 COMITÉ DIRECTEUR

The CD is a group of members working full-time for AEGEE. They live in Brussels and are in charge of all organisational, thematic, financial and representation aspects within the association. They all sit on the very first row. During the Agora they must present their activity reports so that we can all evaluate what the CD has been doing on the past months.

5.3.5 THE REST OF THE PARTICIPANTS

We **ALL** are active actors in an Agora. Please never be afraid and **join discussions** as much as you want. There are so many different members in AEGEE, there are always people that will agree with you and be happy you dared to speak up!

6 CONTENT

6.1 THE CONTENT OF THE AGORA (aka the Agenda)

Ok then, let's focus now on what goes on in those plenaries sessions that involve so many people and take so much time:

6.1.1 PRESENTATION OF THE ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE CD

As we have already mentioned, the CD must explain to the Agora what they have been doing. There is some time allocated for questions.

6.1.2 FINANCIAL REPORTS

Same as above, AEGEE-Europe's money is a general interest issue. Thus Financial Director presents both a financial report and a budget for the next months that explains what the CD will do with the fees you and your local paid.

6.1.3 ACTIVITY REPORT SESSIONS

This Agora there will be two sessions for all the Activity Reports of the Commissions as well as those of Working Groups and Projects willing to evaluate their work. Here you will be updated on what they have done the last six months and you can ask questions about their work.

6.1.4 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan is an overview of all goals that AEGEE as a European network wants to achieve together in three years. Every third year, AEGEE-Europe develops a new Strategic Plan that has to be discussed and approved by the Autumn Agora. Again, this approval is also meant to be a commitment from every Antenna (according to their respective possibilities) to contribute to achieving our common goals!

6.1.5 WORKSHOP + PRYTANIA PRESENTATIONS

Although both WS and Prytania take place in separate sessions we are all entitled to know what they will be about. So they are presented shortly (in a couple of minutes) during the plenary. A local can ask questions on the recommendation of a Prytanium when it hasn't been represented during it. No questions for WS output, sorry.

6.1.6 MOTIONS

Although the Chair team carefully prepares the agenda for every day of the Agora, it is always possible that there are issues not on the agenda that members would like to address. This is what motions can be used for. There are two types, a procedural motion addresses a mistake in the procedure and this motion can be presented at any time by a delegate and will be discussed immediately. For all other motions the Chair decides when and for how long they will be discussed, so you can contact the Chair to see when and where you should present the motion.

Motions are not the same as proposals which aim to change the rules and force bodies to do something. They are more a strong advice that the Agora gives on a matter that has been brought to the attention of the members.

6.1.7 CANDIDATURES

Members willing to become part of any Commission, the Comité Directeur, the Chair Team or the SUCT must present their candidature to the Agora. You might want to ask questions...

6.1.8 VOTING SESSIONS

All proposals, candidatures and reports from the Comité Directeur must be voted upon. Before all voting sessions, the Juridical Commission explains the proceeding, so don't worry about it! In any case, we are dealing with voting sessions below.

6.1.9 THE CONVENTION D'ADHÉSION

This is a unique moment for all those new locals willing to become a member of our AEGEE family. After signing the Convention d'Adhésion, contacts become contact-antennae. A step closer to being an official antenna. It is a really moving moment because, as the contract is being signed, the Agora sings a song (see below).

Convention d'Adhesion
On la signe, on la signe
Convention d'Adhesion
On la signe tout le temps!

7 VOTING

There are, at least, two voting sessions. In any case, the Juridical Commission always explains how to proceed and if there is any other particularity.

There are four ways of voting:

7.1 VOTING, VOTING, VOTING

7.1.1 BY ACCLAMATION

If there are no objections, the Agora can ratify minor decisions by clapping. The Agenda for the Agora, or any change made to it, are ratified this way.

7.1.2 BY ROLL-CALL

The Chairperson names all the antennae and they state if they are in favour, against or if they go for an abstention. It is the system used in Prytania, for instance. In a roll-call voting during a Prytanium every antenna has a single vote. On the other hand, if the roll-call is made during a plenary session, every antenna is entitled to have as many votes as they deserve according to the members they have.

7.1.3 BY BALLOT

Just on the moment locals arrive in the Agora, Juridical Commission gives all of them an envelope with the votes they have. It is extremely important that delegates take care of those votes and take them to plenary sessions. Otherwise they will not be able to vote.

7.1.4 ONLINE VOTING

All voting for proposals, reports and budgets happen online. Delegates receive a password with which they can log on to the voting system and make their vote. If you are a first-time delegate it is good to try your password and the system before coming to the Agora, the Chairteam always provides a test vote option.

It's **extremely important** that you come to the voting sessions with your ballots ready for the voting since once the *Chairperson* starts the process nobody will be allowed to enter or leave the hall.

AND ONE LAST THING (WELL, THREE OF THEM)...

Apart from all we have mentioned in this brief guide, you will have plenty of opportunities during the Agora to meet different people from other locals. Maybe you might find their experiences useful to apply in your antennae. You will learn a lot in this event, not only in plenary sessions. So squeeze all you can out of your Agora.

All info you'll need before the Agora (proposals being discussed, candidatures, etc.) will be included in the Agora booklet. An on-line version of it will be published, at least, two weeks before the Agora. This means you'll have time to have a look at it before your arrival! Print it at home or save it on your phone, tablet or laptop. We recommend you to have a version of it everywhere you go, so that you know what it is going on at that moment.

On the arrival day there are always two small workshops: a language one (on the language of the country hosting the Agora) and one where both AEGEE and the Agora are explained. If you are a new member be sure to take advantage of these workshops, you are the reason we are doing them!

And folks, nothing else to say in here, apart from that "see you... somewhere in Europe!"