

## **The 2001 SYNDESMOS events**

**The summer of 2001 featured six events in five different regions of the world. All events were part of a single three-year perspective focusing on Orthodox Youth Co-operation, Leadership Training, Theological Awareness and Inter-Christian Dialogue. Maybe the most remarkable events were the Festival in France and the historic leadership training course in Korea.**

**The Festival was planned by a team of some 20 French and international youth who discussed and shaped the programme together for over a year. No stone was left unturned! In this way, an unusually large team could creatively implement an event with up to 180 people present! This form of organisation was challenging and far from easy, but it provided a unique occasion of working in one spirit, seeking together the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2,16). The resulting atmosphere, blessed by the presence of Archbishop Anastasios (a former SYNDESMOS Vice-President), was a stronger statement of the unity of the Church than any written text. The value of this participatory approach has been recognised by others as well. A recent EU document on youth emphasises the importance of educational *'exchanges among peers and forms of experimentation where the process is more important than the outcome'*<sup>1</sup>.**

**The Leadership Training Course in Korea responded to the need for training expressed by local youth. For the first time in SYNDESMOS history, Korean, Chinese and Japanese Orthodox gathered together with their peers from Australia, Greece, the Holy Land, Poland and the USA. The group discovered the life of the Orthodox Church in Asia, but also discussed practical issues of youth work, summer camps and student groups. An Intercultural Youth Encounter in Serbia gathered youth from around the world around the issue of Orthodoxy and the arts. The event was the first of a series of encounters that will focus on cultural themes. An event dedicated to music (liturgical and secular) is planned in Samos, Greece, in 2002.**

**The second SYNDESMOS Youth Camp on Trikeri Island was a wonderful occasion for youth to strengthen links, to learn about their respective Churches, movements and SYNDESMOS, to render service to the islanders by cleaning its surface. Another camp centring on diakonia was the annual work camp on the Holy Mountain on Ecology & Spirituality. Participants from nine different countries worked together at the Hilandar monastery as part of a long-term effort to preserve the unique ecological environment of Mount Athos. The Orthodox Youth Pilgrimage to Russia focused on strengthening contacts with youth movements in Eastern Europe and beyond. All participants were active youth workers, using the pilgrimage to discuss practical and spiritual aspects of youth work. As a result, an international meeting of youth camp organisers is planned in Russia in 2002.**

<sup>1</sup> EC White Paper on Youth, Brussels 2001, p. 13