



ASPEN FRANCE YOUNG AMBASSADOR PROGRAM TROPHY

Hilton Hotel, Lyon, March 24th, 2005

PRESS RELEASE

The first prize of the “Young Ambassador of Lyon and Saint Etienne” trophies was awarded on March 24th, 2005, to a young student “coached” by Institut Aspen France, member of this program for the first time this year.

“Young Ambassador of Lyon and Saint-Etienne” is a program for hosting foreign students and assisting their integration into the economic and cultural life of Lyon and the Rhône-Alpes region during their year of studies in Lyon. They are given privileged contacts with economic and institutional decision-makers and acquire a veritable international scope, thus contributing to Lyon’s international influence in their home countries during their stay and once they return home. Each student has to prepare a project aimed at strengthening ties between Lyon and his/her home country or region. Four projects receive awards at the end of the annual program.

1) Coached by Pascal Perzo, Executive Director of Institut Aspen France, Beini Xu, a Chinese student from Shanghai, received the **First Prize for her **Painted Walls in Lyon and Shanghai Project**.**

When visiting Lyon, you can visit the painted walls of the city, and notably those at the Musée Urbain Tony Garnier, a certain number of which were painted by foreign artists and represent their vision of the Ideal City (walls by Americans, Russians, Mexicans, Egyptians, Ivoirians, etc.). Observing that, despite the longstanding relations between Lyon and China, there is no Chinese wall so far, Beini Xu proposed to have Chinese artists paint a wall in Lyon, and, in return, to have artists from Lyon paint a wall depicting Lyon in Shanghai.

Such a project is a symbolic yet concrete way of forging closer links between the two regions. Given the involvement of partners from various sectors, notably on the cultural and artistic levels, this project is sure to strengthen the influence of Lyon and its actors so as to assist in the development of economic relations.

For her project, Beini Xu will be supported by Institut Aspen France, which initiated work on China at a roundtable of Chinese and French mayors and business leaders in Lyon in February 2004. Another roundtable will be held in 2006 along with the inauguration of the painted wall.

2) A second project selected by the jury as one of the best projects proposed (out of a total of 116) was presented by Farah Chaaban, a Lebanese student from Beirut and coached by Valérie Minard, Head of Programs at Institut Aspen France.

This project will help to forge closer links between Lyon and cities on the South of the Mediterranean Sea through **an exchange of experiences, know-how and good practices in reconciling urban development and the preservation of historical and cultural heritage.**

March 28th, 2005

In 2006, the project will lead to a study trip to Lyon by a group of Mediterranean “Young Managers” to meet with local decision-makers in the areas of urban development and to study how Lyon maintains the link between preserving its history and developing future projects. This question is indeed critical in Lebanon, but also in other cities around the Mediterranean Sea.

Institut Aspen France will also support this project which will be announced – in the presence of the Prime Minister of Morocco and some forty decision-makers from Europe and the South of the Mediterranean, as well as in the presence of Farah Chaaban herself – at the Institute’s upcoming Europe-Mediterranean conference to be held in Casablanca from May 27th to 29th.

3) At the awards ceremony, Institut Aspen France announced that it would renew its participation in the program next year. Furthermore, the Institute will become a partner in “Young Ambassador of Lyon” and will award an Aspen Prize including a scholarship to support the project of a student which corresponds to the Institute’s values and encourages Lyon’s international influence.

Institut Aspen France is an independent, non-partisan international forum for discussion and dialogue, with Michel Pébereau as Chairman of the Advisory Board (Honorary Chairman: Raymond Barre) and Jérôme Huret as President. It is affiliated with the Aspen Institute in the United States, Berlin, Rome, Tokyo and New Delhi. Its goal is to organize informal meetings between leaders and players from the fields of economics, politics, academia, trade unions, culture and the media so as to encourage better mutual understanding and to gain a better outlook on the economic and societal changes facing them.