



Plenary sitting

B8-1133/2016

19.10.2016

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Question for Oral Answer B8-1803/2016

pursuant to Rule 128(5) of the Rules of Procedure

on European Voluntary Service
(2016/2872(RSP))

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on behalf of the ALDE Group

**European Parliament resolution on European Voluntary Service
(2016/2872(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Council Decision of 27 November 2009 on the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011)¹,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 20 September 2011 entitled ‘EU Policies and Volunteering: Recognising and Promoting Cross-border Voluntary Activities in the EU’ (COM(2011)0568),
 - having regard to the European Year of Volunteering (EYV) 2011 Alliance Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe,
 - having regard to the Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 23 October 2013 on volunteering and voluntary activity in Europe³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 June 2012 on recognising and promoting cross-border voluntary activities in the EU⁴,
 - having regard to the European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 22 April 2008 on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion⁶,
 - having regard to the question to the Commission on European Voluntary Service (O-000107/2016 – B8-1803/2016),
 - having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. recalling that in 2016 the European Voluntary Service (EVS) celebrates its 20th anniversary and that 100 000 volunteers have been supported over those 20 years;
- B. emphasising that the European Year of Volunteering 2011, strongly supported by the European Parliament, represented a major political opportunity to highlight the added value of volunteering in Europe and that now, five years later, the European Parliament should reflect on the impact the European Year of Volunteering 2011 had on policy

¹ OJ L 17, 22.1.2010, p. 43.

² OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0549.

⁴ OJ C 332 E, 15.11.2013, p. 14.

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/volunteering_charter_en.pdf

⁶ OJ C 259 E, 29.10.2009, p. 9.

development and on how volunteering is embedded in key European programmes, such as Erasmus+ and its European Voluntary Service;

- C. recalling that the European Year of Volunteering 2011 provided the impetus and context for the establishment and/or revision of national and legal frameworks for volunteering across Europe; stressing, however, that Europe still lacks a coordinated volunteering policy with a single contact point in the EU institutions;
- D. recalling that volunteering is undertaken of a person's own free will, choice and motivation, without their seeking financial gain; emphasising that it can be defined as a journey of solidarity and that it is a way of addressing human, social and environmental needs and concerns;
- E. stressing that volunteering has a value and importance as one of the most visible expressions of solidarity, which promotes and facilitates social inclusion, builds social capital and produces a transformative effect on society, and that volunteering contributes both to the development of a thriving civil society, which can offer creative and innovative solutions to common challenges, and to economic growth, and that as such it deserves to be measured in a specific, targeted way in terms of both economic and social capital;
- F. recalling that a supportive environment is key to ensuring engagement by more European citizens in volunteering, thus guaranteeing secure and sustainable funding for the volunteering infrastructure, especially organisations involving volunteers;
- G. emphasising that volunteering requires a combination of support mechanisms and/or appropriate organisational structures that should be further strengthened by a suitable legal framework that identifies rights and responsibilities for volunteers and volunteering;
- H. stressing that every person is entitled to equal access to volunteering opportunities and protection against all kinds of discrimination, and should be given the right to reconcile their volunteering activity with their private and working life, so they can achieve a certain amount of flexibility during the volunteering activity;
- I. emphasising that recognition of volunteering is also crucial in order to encourage appropriate incentives for all stakeholders and so increase the quantity, quality and impact of volunteering, and that this requires the development of a culture of recognition which shows volunteering as a driving force for putting European values into practice;
- J. recognising that the new EU MFF 2014-2020 secured some EU funds for volunteering, with, notably, the Europe for Citizens programme, currently managed by DG HOME, retaining volunteering as a priority; stressing that the new Erasmus+ programme is still offering opportunities to fund and support volunteer projects, notably through the EVS Programme, and that the EU Aid Volunteers programme has been launched by DG ECHO to provide practical support to humanitarian aid projects; noting, however, that access for volunteer organisations to other major EU funds, such as the European Structural and Investment Funds, remains very limited;

- K. recalling that the current refugee crisis is a relevant example, and a visible symbol, of the importance of volunteers and the way that they embody European values, contribute to resilience and are available to offer flexible, pragmatic solutions to shared challenges; recalling that volunteering is a catalyst for social integration and calling on the Member States to encourage migrants to volunteer, as an essential factor in their social inclusion;
1. Recognises that volunteering is an expression of solidarity, freedom and responsibility that contributes to the strengthening of active citizenship and to personal human development, and that it is an essential tool for social inclusion and cohesion, as well as training, education and intercultural dialogue, whilst making an important contribution to the dissemination of European values; stresses that its benefits are also recognised in voluntary work carried out with third countries as a strategic tool for fostering mutual understanding and intercultural relations;
 2. Highlights the importance of providing a legal framework which identifies a volunteering status, with rights and responsibilities for volunteers and volunteering, and facilitates mobility and recognition; encourages Member States that still need to define a legal environment for volunteers to use the European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers;
 3. Calls on the Member States to implement concrete validation processes in the framework of the Council Recommendation of 2012; asks for any future European Skills Passport and Europass initiatives to give greater relevance to learning acquired through formal, informal and non-formal experiences, including volunteering; recalls that volunteering provides skills facilitating access to the labour market and that such competences should be reflected in a bottom-up-approach based curriculum, giving prominence to skills acquired through volunteering and good will;
 4. Calls on the Member States to promote the EVS in their educational and academic systems as a tool to disseminate education for solidarity and civic engagement among the younger generation;
 5. Suggests that making volunteer time eligible as co-funding for EU grants, as recently proposed by the Commission in the new Financial Regulation proposal, needs to be supported and implemented;
 6. Notes that in Europe nearly 100 million citizens of all ages are volunteers, whose work contributes to the production of approximately 5 % of its GDP; calls on the Commission to consider the economic value of goods and services provided by volunteers through more volunteer-focused policy making;
 7. Calls on the Member States to adopt the system developed by the International Labour Organisation to measure the economic value of volunteering; calls on Eurostat to support Member States in this exercise to ensure the collection of comparative data in Europe but also to develop common EU-wide indicators and methodologies for the measurement of the social impact of volunteering;
 8. Calls on the Member States to establish adequately funded national voluntary services schemes and to improve access to quality information on volunteering opportunities at national and local level, in particular through existing youth information networks and

peer-to-peer information; encourages the Member States to create national civic services hubs, which would also promote international volunteering opportunities;

9. Recommends more internationalisation of the EVS and proposes to invite all EFTA/EEA countries, acceding countries and candidate countries to cooperate with the EU Member States, in accordance with their association agreements and bilateral agreements with the EU; stresses the need to propose more volunteering opportunities abroad and enhance cooperation of volunteering organisations in both EU and neighbouring countries;
10. Asks the Commission to conduct a study on national voluntary services schemes, as well as civic service and solidarity corps and the existing environment for potential volunteers among Member States, in order to facilitate mutual understanding and the dissemination of good practices, and the possibility of establishing a European Civic Service – all with a view to fostering EU citizenship;
11. Asks the Commission to improve and reshape the communication strategy on the EVS by highlighting the social, human and civic value of volunteering, rather than focusing on the opportunity to travel for free across Europe thanks to EVS;
12. Supports the Commission's idea of creating a new volunteering initiative, the EU Solidarity Corps; calls on the Commission to make sure that volunteer organisations in particular are involved in the design of the initiative and that its implementation will not undermine the budgets already allocated for other programmes;
13. Insists that the EVS programme should benefit the individuals and organisations involved, as well as society as a whole, and that the EVS should enhance the civic engagement dimension of the Erasmus+ Programme; stresses the importance of promoting the EVS to all young people, especially those who are not yet interested in volunteering and mobility, thus creating motivation and changes in attitude, without excluding the older generation, since they have an important contribution to make, for example as mentors;
14. Stresses the role of active ageing in volunteering and reinforces the role of both young and older citizens in civic engagement in Europe, by building on the impetus of the European Year of Voluntary Activities (2011) and the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between generations (2012);
15. Stresses that the EVS should be based on quality volunteering offers and follow the Volunteering Charter and the principles of the Quality Charter on Learning Mobility, and that the EVS should be based on a structure that encourages volunteering organisations to become hosting organisations, thus providing them with adequate funding and training, while strengthening the role of coordinating organisations that support a large number of hosting organisations, for example in terms of administration and training;
16. Recalls that the EVS should be based on a structure that allows quick and easy access by young people to the programme, and therefore calls for a simplification of its current application system;

17. Stresses the need to strengthen the follow up and local dimension after a volunteering experience abroad by providing support, not only before departure but also upon return, to local communities in the form of post-orientation and post-integration training;
18. Insists that quality mentorship must be provided throughout the process by means of responsible volunteer management and by making volunteers aware of their own responsibility as regards engagement with the organisation and the community;
19. Recommends that the Commission should take into consideration the position of the European Alliance for Volunteering and other volunteer-based organisations whose recommendations are reflected in the Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe (PAVE);
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.