



Volunteering: passport to a job?

Committees: Committee on Culture and Education

Volunteering is a way to remain active, in contact with the world of work, and can even help to find a job. A "European Skills Passport" could certify official recognition of skills, acquired or demonstrated through volunteering, both for professional and learning purposes. A report voted by the Culture and Education Committee on Thursday calls on EU Member States to create an appropriate legal framework and national strategies to this end.

Europe has about 100 million volunteers, whose work contributes to the production of 5% of its GDP. Volunteering is an important vector of social integration, which should be supported and developed, say MEPs.

As volunteering is considered an important source of informal learning, young or elderly people of those from disadvantaged groups could officially use the skills thus acquired to seek a job, gain access to formal training or validate certain university courses.

In the report voted on Thursday, the committee backs the European Commission's plan to create a "European Skills Passport", on the Europass (on-line CV) model to ensure cross-border recognition of qualifications obtained through volunteering.

Catalyst for integration

MEPs also stress that volunteering is a catalyst for social integration, particularly of young people, migrants, or people from disadvantaged social backgrounds. National authorities should provide teaching support and appropriate financial aid to young volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Enabling migrants and minorities to volunteer is strongly encouraged, as an essential factor in their social inclusion.

National and regional authorities are urged to provide stable funding, including financial incentives for associations involved in cross-border volunteering activities, and especially small organisations with limited resources.

A European portal, centralised at EU level, should be created to help to improve information, cooperation and the exchange of good practices among organisations active in the volunteering field.

The committee's proposals aim to build on the impetus of the European Year of Voluntary Activities (2011) and contribute to those of the European Year of Active Ageing (2012).

*Plenary vote: 12 June 2012
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