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DRAFT REPORT

on 'Recognising and promoting cross-border voluntary activities in the EU'
(2011/2293(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Marco Scurria

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on ‘Recognising and promoting cross-border voluntary activities in the EU’ (2011/2293(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to Articles 165, 166 and 214 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Decision 1719/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing the Youth in Action programme for the period 2007 to 2013¹,
- having regard to Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning²,
- having regard to Decision No 1904/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 establishing for the period 2007 to 2013 the programme Europe for Citizens to promote active European citizenship³,
- having regard to Council Decision 2010/37/EC of 27 November 2009 on the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011)⁴,
- having regard to the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 24 April 2006, on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field⁵,
- having regard to the Council Resolution of 27 November 2007 on voluntary activities of young people⁶,
- having regard to the Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 16 May 2007 on implementing the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people⁷,
- having regard to the Council Recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of

¹ OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 30.

² OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 45.

³ Decision as last amended by Decision No 9999/2000/EC (OJ L 999, 20.12.2000, p. 99).

⁴ OJ L 17, 22.1.2010, p. 43.

⁵ OJ No C 168, 20.7.2006, p. 1.

⁶ <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st14/st14427-re01.en07.pdf>

⁷ OJ No C 241, 20.9.2008, p. 1.

young volunteers across the European Union¹,

- [6] Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: European Charter of Mobility, Doc. Carta europea di qualità per la mobilità²,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 3 October 2011 on the role of voluntary activities in social policy³,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 29 November 2011 on the role of voluntary activities in sport in promoting active citizenship⁴,
- having regard to the Commission’s EU citizenship report 2010 entitled ‘Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens’ rights’, of 27 October 2010 (COM(2010)0603),
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 5 September 2007 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘Promoting young people’s full participation in education, employment and society’ (COM(2007)0498),
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 27 April 2009 to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘An EU Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering - A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities’ (COM(2009)0200),
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 3 March 2010, entitled ‘Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 15 September 2010 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘Youth on the Move – An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union’ (COM(2010)0477),
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 20 September 2011 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on EU Policies and Volunteering: Recognising and Promoting Cross-border Voluntary Activities in the EU (COM(2011)0568), on ‘Recognising and promoting cross-border voluntary activities in the EU’
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 23 November 2010 to the European Parliament and the Council entitled ‘How to express EU citizens’ solidarity through volunteering: First reflections on a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid

¹ OJ No C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 8.

² OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 5.

³ <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st14/st14552.en11.pdf>

⁴ OJ No C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 24.

Corps' (COM(2010)0683), The Commission will propose the creation of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps in 2012.

- having regard to its resolution of 22 April 2008 on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion (2007/2149(INI))¹,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A7-0000/2012),
- A. whereas ‘volunteering’ means activities, including formal, non-formal, informal and vocational training, which are undertaken of a person's own free will, choice and motivation, and without concern for financial gain, which benefit the individual volunteer, communities and society as a whole;
- B. in view of the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011) in terms of impact on the taking of policy decisions at national, regional, local and European levels, and increased public visibility and awareness-raising;
- C. whereas volunteering is an informal learning experience suitable for persons of all ages; whereas it offers benefits in terms of personal development, strengthening of civic values and European identity, intercultural learning and professional opportunities, as well as contributing to the aims of the European Union’s (EU) policies on social inclusion, employment, education, development of skills and citizenship;
- D. whereas volunteering is an important factor in creating social capital and development and in promoting socio-economic cohesion, and in view of the potential of voluntary labour as a valuable resource within the Europe 2020 growth strategy;
- E. in view of the growing number of young and older EU citizens participating in volunteering, spread out over the areas of education, culture, youth policies, sport, the environment, sustainable development, health, immigration, corporate social responsibility and the EU’s relations with third countries;
- F. whereas there is a huge variety between the different cultures, traditions, legal systems and organisational methods for volunteering in the EU Member States; in view of the persistence of various obstacles, since volunteering is not recognised in national law or in international law;
- G. in view of the added value of action by the EU in promoting cooperation between the Member States and exchanges of information and good practice concerning volunteering, while respecting the subsidiarity principle;
1. Calls on the Member States to assess the need for a clear legal framework for volunteers and to draw up national strategies to promote the growth of volunteering activities;
 2. Asks the national, regional and local authorities and the EU to pay particular attention to

¹ OJ C 259 E, 29.10.2009, p. 9.

disadvantaged young people and young people with fewer opportunities, so that they may participate in volunteering activities and, to that end, benefit from adequate educational and financial support;

3. Reiterates the need to make volunteering accessible to immigrants and the Roma people too, as an essential element in encouraging their integration and social inclusion;
4. Encourages the Member States to support cooperation between organisers of voluntary activities in EU countries to promote the mobility of young volunteers across Europe, with the aim of fostering mutual intercultural enrichment;
5. Highlights the need to ensure that high-quality volunteering is developed, both nationally and at cross-border level, through comprehensive information and appropriate training for volunteers;
6. Asks the Commission and the national, regional and local authorities and the various civil society organisations to improve information networks in order to make everyone aware of volunteering opportunities;
7. Therefore proposes that a centralised EU portal be created, to include a section on cross-border volunteering, with information about the programmes available, their costs and the conditions for participation;
8. Encourages the Member States to adopt the volunteering measurement method developed by the John Hopkins University and approved by the International Labour Organisation with a view to making available comparable statistics and providing a clear picture of the significant contribution made by voluntary work;
9. Stresses the importance of providing information to and also permitting senior citizens to volunteer in another EU country, as already supported by the Grundtvig programme, encouraging active ageing as a rich source of wisdom and experience for society;
10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to give a high profile to volunteering in sport and to reduce the barriers to sports volunteering across the EU;
11. Urges the national, regional and local authorities and the EU to recognise the important contribution also made by volunteering to protecting the environment, supporting its activities in environmental education, prevention and crisis management, and in defending artistic and cultural heritage;
12. Supports the Commission's proposal to establish a 'European Skills Passport', so that the skills acquired through volunteering may be officially recognised, both for professional and learning purposes, which is a vital element in motivating potential volunteers and in creating a link between non-formal learning and formal education;
13. Urges the Member States to develop mechanisms for validating non-formal and formal learning outcomes, which will improve the value and transferability of the skills acquired outside formal education;

14. Supports the Commission's proposal to create a 'European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps', which will increase the participation of volunteers in solidarity actions within the EU's humanitarian aid policy;
15. Asks the national, regional and local authorities and the EU to give financial and other support to the organisations involved in volunteering work, including all the associations and networks, with a view to enhancing their roles, activities and achievements for the benefit of society;
16. Calls on the Commission, in particular, to ensure that volunteering projects are included in all new funding programmes;
17. Recommends that the Commission and the Member States maintain a synergy between 2011 and future years, by integrating the volunteering dimension, which is an expression of active citizenship that promotes social integration, including that of older citizens, within both the European Year for Active Ageing (2012) and the proposed European Year of Citizens (2013);
18. Recommends that the Commission maintain the useful contact points set up both with 'EYV 2011 Alliance', which includes many civil society volunteering and networking organisations, and with the national coordinating bodies, strategic partners and spokesmen of the national governments in this sector, given the large variety of bodies responsible for volunteering in the EU;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

GROUNDS

After a full year of initiatives that have seen volunteers across Europe engaged in promotion, information and awareness-raising activities, the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011) has just come to an end, passing the baton to 2012 - European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations - another important occasion on which to reflect on the value of volunteering in everyday life and give older people the chance to make their own contribution to the growth of solidarity in the community.

In light of the many initiatives and debates during 2011, it has been shown how voluntary activities are a tool for individuals and associations to tackle human needs and concerns, whether social, intergenerational or environmental.

Emphasis has been placed on how volunteering is an expression of active citizenship in all spheres of social life and on how this activity is essential for the development of democratic values, human dignity, equality and subsidiarity.

Volunteering silently assumes the role of catalyst for social change and indispensable tool for the active support of society.

The figures show that there is a 'body' of 100 million European citizens working in various voluntary activities, able to contribute to the production of 5% of European GDP, which is considered by 80% of citizens as an important element of democratic life and voluntary participation in it by individuals.

Volunteering is an inexhaustible source of informal learning and personal development; cross-border volunteering, in particular, is an opportunity for intercultural enrichment for young European citizens.

Major sporting events involve an ever-increasing number of European countries in joint organisation of events, involving thousands of volunteers from various Member States.

Unfortunately, natural and environmental disasters that hit Europe also frequently have effects on several Member States at the same time, and involve volunteers from every part of Europe, who come to offer help, labour and solidarity. In addition to the difficulties caused by the disaster, they also face problems due to language barriers and red tape. The latter can be reduced through appropriate European support policies.

The need to continue to differentiate clearly and unequivocally between the value of volunteering, provided free of charge, and profit-making activities, still remains. So, too, does the essential need to emphasise the role of volunteering in promoting, both within the EU and beyond, the principles of identity and common European values, such as solidarity and social cohesion.

Following the visibility acquired through the European Year of Volunteering, it is appropriate to focus on various specific measures to promote voluntary activities, such as the idea of establishing a centralised EU portal on volunteering with a specific section dedicated to cross-

border volunteering, creating a 'European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps' and developing a 'European Skills Passport'.

The European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps will select, train and send volunteers to provide support to local organisations in the event of natural disasters.

Another aim being pursued is to develop synergies with existing organisations and structures, to avoid duplication and funding diversion: the Corps will in fact act on a demand-driven and needs-based basis. il corpo interverrà, infatti, su domanda e in base alle esigenze.

The European Skills Passport will, on the other hand, provide for the cross-border recognition of professional skills, and will make it possible to keep a record confirming the capacities and skills acquired through volunteering.

Il Passaporto ricalcherà il modello Europass (CV europeo on-line) per consentire di registrare le competenze in modo trasparente e comparabile: The Passport will be based on the Europass model (European on-line CV) to make it possible to record skills in a transparent and comparable way: what is required, in fact, is greater public recognition of volunteering as a useful experience for young people with the aim of acquiring skills that can be used, for example, in education and in work.