



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

2009/0072(CNS)

5.11.2009

OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on the proposal for a Council decision on the European Year of Volunteering
(2011)
(COM(2009)0254 – C7-0054/2009 – 2009/0072/CNS))

Rapporteur: Marian Harkin

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SHORT JUSTIFICATION

1. Approximately 100 million EU citizens volunteer. The European Year on Volunteering 2011 will be an opportunity for the EU and Member States to recognise, facilitate, support and celebrate volunteering. Volunteering is undertaken of a persons own free will, choice and motivation and is without concern for financial gain. Voluntary activities should not replace paid professional opportunities but they benefit the individual volunteer communities and society as a whole.

2. All sectors and all ages can choose to volunteer as outlined in the Commission's Demography Report 2008: "Meeting Social Needs in an Ageing Society". This may be to support a specific project or it may be on a regular basis. Volunteering may involve hands on participation or it may be a transfer of knowledge or expertise via the Internet. Member States need to recognise the huge potential and diversity of voluntary activity and use the opportunities presented by 2011 as a learning opportunity to exchange information and best practice and use these tools to support voluntary action and create an enabling volunteer infrastructure for all citizens wishing to volunteer.

3. It is important that we make every effort to fully engage volunteers and to ensure we gain the maximum synergies between existing EU programmes (e.g. Europe for Citizens, Youth in Action and the Action Programme in the field of Life Long Learning) and actions undertaken during 2011. It is important to promote synergies between the previous and subsequent "years" (i.e. 2010 Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and 2012 (proposed) Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity). A further link with the 2011 Special Olympics World Games in Greece will further increase the visibility and recognition of volunteering.

However, while we are restricted in the action proposed by the Commission we can take there are a few practical steps we can take to further enhance the outcomes from 2011:

a. Encourage each Member State especially in the new democracies within the EU Member States to compile data on the voluntary/non profit institutions. Already 6 Member States have implemented the UN Handbook on Non Profit Institutions and agreement has been reached for the introduction of an ILO Manual in conjunction with John Hopkins University on the measurement of volunteer work. These are two very valuable tools in measuring the economic value of volunteering and ensuring comparative data from different Member States on the scope, scale and distribution of voluntary activity.

b. Promote the use of volunteer time as matching funding in all EU projects and encourage Member States to do likewise with National projects.

c. Ensure the participation of the voluntary/community sector in the consultation, decision making and subsequent operation of the Structural, Cohesion and the Rural Development Funds. The partnership principle enshrined in the Community Strategic Guidelines is not always adhered to and the European Commission has a responsibility to ensure that its own policies and procedures as written are implemented.

AMENDMENTS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following amendments in its report:

Amendment 1

Proposal for a decision

Recital 1

Text proposed by the Commission

(1) The Community and the Member States aim to promote the development of human resources with a view to a high level of employment and combating social exclusion.

Amendment

(1) The Community and the Member States aim to promote the development of human resources with a view to a high level of employment and combating social exclusion ***by adopting measures aimed at improving knowledge, developing exchanges of information and of best practices, promoting innovative approaches and evaluating experiences.***

Amendment 2

Proposal for a decision

Recital 3

Text proposed by the Commission

(3) Volunteering ***constitutes a non-formal learning experience which enables both the development of professional skills and competences as well as a major form of active civic participation.*** Actions carried out by volunteers of all ages are crucial to the development of democracy, one of the founding principles of the European Union, ***and contribute to the development of human resources and to the social cohesion.***

Amendment

(3) Volunteering ***promotes and encourages partnership and active citizenship which puts European values such as solidarity and non-discrimination into action.*** Actions carried out by volunteers of all ages are crucial to the development of democracy - ***in particular participative democracy,*** one of the founding principles of the European Union.

Justification

True democracy encompasses representative democracy (politicians) and participative democracy (citizens who influence by participating and by action).

The amendment highlights and underlines the key role played by volunteering in the current social environment. Citizens that actively take part in the construction of European societies

should be supported in their activity. Volunteering plays a key element in the current social context.

Amendment 3

Proposal for a decision

Recital 3 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(3a) Active engagement in voluntary activities, particularly in a period of economic crisis and increased unemployment, provides concrete support to people to avoid marginalisation and facilitate social integration and integration into the labour market.

Amendment 4

Proposal for a decision

Recital 4

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(4) In fast-changing societies there is a need to ensure the effectiveness of volunteer supporting infrastructure to allow more people to engage in voluntary activities. It is ***therefore*** important to support peer-learning and the exchange of good practices at Community level.

(4) In fast-changing societies there is a need to ensure the effectiveness of volunteer supporting infrastructure to allow more people to engage in voluntary activities. It is ***also*** important to support ***and facilitate*** peer-learning and the exchange of good practices at Community level.

Amendment 5

Proposal for a decision

Recital 5

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(5) The 1997 Intergovernmental Conference adopted Declaration 38 on volunteering,⁵ which was attached to the final act of the Treaty of Amsterdam and recognised the important contribution made by voluntary service activities to

(5) The 1997 Intergovernmental Conference adopted Declaration 38 on volunteering,⁵ which was attached to the final act of the Treaty of Amsterdam and recognised the important contribution made by voluntary service activities to

developing social solidarity.

developing social solidarity **and promoting intergenerational volunteering.**

Justification

Older people are living longer, are willing to volunteer and have expertise and experience to impart. In the context of demographic challenges facing the EU intergenerational volunteering will be crucial in promoting intergenerational solidarity.

Amendment 6

**Proposal for a decision
Recital 12**

Text proposed by the Commission

(12) Volunteering is targeted by several community programmes that focus on mobility in volunteering, such as the European Voluntary Service of the Youth in Action programme, the Life Long Learning programme and the Europe for Citizens programme.

Amendment

(12) Volunteering is targeted by several community programmes that focus on mobility in volunteering, such as the European Voluntary Service of the Youth in Action programme, the Life Long Learning programme and the Europe for Citizens programme. ***Given the horizontal nature of volunteering, it will create synergies between the above-mentioned programmes.***

Amendment 7

**Proposal for a decision
Recital 13**

Text proposed by the Commission

(13) There exists a large variety of voluntary activities throughout Europe which should be preserved and developed further.

Amendment

deleted

Amendment 8

**Proposal for a decision
Recital 13 a (new)**

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(13a) The EU has a significant role to

play in promoting, developing and supporting voluntary activities throughout the EU. However, it is important to recognise and respect the diversity of volunteering within individual Member States.

Amendment 9

Proposal for a decision Recital 13 b (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(13b) The European Year of Volunteering should offer an opportunity to encourage Member States to create legal certainty for volunteers as regards their legal status and the working conditions based on the UN and ILO definitions of volunteering.

Amendment 10

Proposal for a decision Recital 14

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(14) Volunteering has the potential to contribute to the harmonious development of European societies. *Voluntary activities constitute a rich non-formal learning experience which enhances professional skills and competences, contributes to employability and a sense of solidarity, develops social skills, smoothes integration into society and fosters civic participation.*

(14) Volunteering has the potential to contribute to the harmonious development of European societies, *promoting social inclusion, social well-being, combating racism and prejudice and contributing to intercultural and interreligious dialogue.*

Justification

Volunteering can also play an important role in contributing to social wellbeing, helping people build connections and a sense of belonging within their communities.

Amendment 11

Proposal for a decision Recital 14 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(14a) Voluntary activities constitute a rich non-formal learning experience which enhances professional skills and competences, contributes to employability by facilitating reintegration into the labour market, develops social skills and contributes to the personal growth and well-being of individuals.

Justification

Underline the relevance of volunteering. Voluntary activities can play an important role in the personal growth and well-being of individuals and contribute to the growth of the European environment in terms of solidarity.

Amendment 12

Proposal for a decision Recital 14 b (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(14b) Voluntary activities must not replace professional paid employment but add value and enhance quality of life. In respecting this, voluntary activities should neither substitute the responsibility of public authorities as regards universal services nor be misused as a means of meeting basic social service needs.

Amendment 13

Proposal for a decision Recital 14 c (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(14c) As part of their strategy for Corporate Social Responsibility employers could support and encourage volunteering activities .

Amendment 14

Proposal for a decision

Recital 15

Text proposed by the Commission

(15) Despite this, the potential of volunteering is still not fully realised. A European Year of Volunteering will provide the opportunity to demonstrate in a European context that volunteering increases civic participation. It can help foster a sense of belonging and commitment *of citizens* to their society at all levels – local, regional, national and European.

Amendment

(15) Despite this, the potential of volunteering is still not fully realised. A European Year of Volunteering will provide the opportunity to demonstrate in a European context that volunteering increases civic participation. It can help *to* foster ***among citizens*** a sense of belonging and commitment to their society at all levels – local, regional, national and European – ***and to encourage Member States to make it possible for foreign residents in every Member State to work as volunteers for not-for-profit organisations or to do unpaid work.***

Justification

If volunteering is intended to strengthen social cohesion in Europe, it must serve to combat discrimination in all its forms and must therefore have a status which makes it accessible to all residents in every Member State, including the nationals of third countries and countries which do not have partnerships with the EU.

Amendment 15

Proposal for a decision

Recital 15 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(15a) To further realise the potential of volunteering, Member States could consider promoting measures that could lead to the recognition of volunteering work when calculating pensions.

Justification

Based on the experience with the voluntary service (Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr) in Germany, for instance, this has proved to be an efficient as well as necessary instrument.

Amendment 16

Proposal for a decision

Recital 16

Text proposed by the Commission

(16) The Year 2011 will be the 10th Anniversary of the 2001 International Year of Volunteers of the United Nations.

Amendment

(16) The Year 2011 will be the 10th Anniversary of the 2001 International Year of Volunteers of the United Nations ***and will also coincide with the 2011 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Athens. Given the crucial role of volunteers in supporting the Special Olympics, there is a real opportunity for creating synergies in this regard.***

Amendment 17

Proposal for a decision

Recital 16 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(16a) Volunteering plays a major role in environmental and civil protection and its contribution must be recognised and supported in every field, especially within the new democracies of the EU.

Amendment 18

Proposal for a decision

Recital 16 b (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(16b) The recognition of volunteering as an appropriate activity through which to acquire competences and skills, e.g. through YOUTHPASS with a linkage to EUROPASS, will ensure that volunteering is not seen as an alternative to formal training but a complement to it and furthermore it will facilitate the mobility of volunteers.

Amendment 19

Proposal for a decision

Recital 16 c (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(16c) Apart from its social role, volunteering has an economic value and makes a significant contribution to the economy.

Justification

Already over 31 countries use the UN Handbook - e.g. US, Canada, Czech Republic, Belgium etc. It is recognised as an accurate statistical tool in measuring the contribution to GDP of the Not for Profit Sector (between 5 & 8% of GDP).

Amendment 20

Proposal for a decision

Recital 16 d (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(16d) Volunteering plays a vital role in preserving the stability and cohesion of societies and makes a significant economic contribution in a period of economic crisis, supporting people in their reintegration into the labour market.

Amendment 21

Proposal for a decision

Recital 16 e (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(16e) The recognition of the contribution of volunteer time as matching funding (in-kind contributions) for European and national projects would be a tangible recognition of the value of volunteer effort and would facilitate voluntary organisations in carrying out their activities.

Justification

A real issue for many voluntary groups is the need to fund raise in order to become involved in voluntary activity. This creates a barrier for the volunteers themselves and in some cases the societies expected to contribute. The use of volunteer time as matching funding in EU and national projects would greatly facilitate the work of many volunteers.

Amendment 22

Proposal for a decision

Article 2 – introductory part

Text proposed by the Commission

The overall purpose of the European Year shall be to encourage and support — notably through the exchange of experience and good practices — the efforts of the Member States, local and regional authorities and civil society to create the conditions conducive to volunteering in the European Union.

Amendment

The overall purpose of the European Year shall be to encourage and support — notably through the exchange of experience and good practices ***and the promotion of innovative approaches and evaluating experiences*** — the efforts ***of the European Union***, the Member States, local and regional authorities and civil society to create the conditions conducive to volunteering in the European Union.

Amendment 23

Proposal for a decision

Article 2 – point 3

Text proposed by the Commission

3. Reward and recognise volunteering activities - To encourage appropriate incentives for individuals, companies and volunteer-development organisations and gain more systematic recognition for volunteering at EU level and in the Member States by policy makers, civil society organisations and employers for skills and competences developed through volunteering.

Amendment

3. Reward and recognise volunteering activities - To encourage appropriate incentives for individuals, companies and volunteer-development organisations ***including proper health and safety cover for volunteers in the form of accident and personal liability insurance during periods of voluntary work according to the national customs and traditions*** and to gain more systematic recognition for volunteering at EU level and in the Member States by policy makers, civil society organisations and employers for skills and competences developed through volunteering. ***Certified past activities for volunteering organisations can also be considered as a positive feature of careers***

in the public sector

Justification

This amendment put emphasis on the further requirement for the public sector apart from individuals, private sectors and civil societies in order to strengthen the policy of the persons worked for this sector, therefore they must be considered open minded and open for the problems and needs of people in needs. With this solution the public sector may get more people committed to real people and their real problems and not to the people only learnt at the universities.

Amendment 24

Proposal for a decision

Article 2 – point 3 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

3a. Encourage international and European solidarity by promoting peace, North-South cooperation and protection of the environment, as well as recognition of the solidarity-based social economy through volunteering.

Justification

Given that the promotion of volunteering reflects a will to strengthen social cohesion both locally and at European and, indeed, international level, it must serve to encourage solidarity between nations and individuals.

Amendment 25

Proposal for a decision

Article 2 – point 4

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

4. Raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering - To raise general awareness of the importance of volunteering as an expression of civic participation which contributes to issues which are of common concern of all Member States, such as a harmonious societal development, economic cohesion.

4. Raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering - To raise general awareness of the importance of volunteering as an expression of civic participation which contributes to issues which are of common concern of all Member States, such as a harmonious societal development, economic cohesion, ***intercultural, interethnic as well as inter-religious dialogue and social integration.***

Amendment 26

Proposal for a decision

Article 3 – paragraph 1 – point 3

Text proposed by the Commission

- conferences, events and initiatives to **promote** debate **and raise** awareness of the importance and value of volunteering and to celebrate the efforts of volunteers;

Amendment

- conferences, events and initiatives to **promoting** debate, **innovative approaches and the evaluation of experiences. Raising** awareness of the importance and value of volunteering and to celebrate the efforts of volunteers;

Amendment 27

Proposal for a decision

Article 3 – paragraph 1 – point 4 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

- **Promote the use of volunteer time as matching funding in European projects;**

Amendment 28

Proposal for a decision

Article 7 – paragraph 1

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

1. The budget for implementing this Decision for the period from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011 is **EUR 6 000 000**.

1. The budget for implementing this Decision for the period from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011 is **EUR 12 000 000**.

PROCEDURE

Title	European Year of Volunteering (2011)
References	COM(2009)0254 – C7-0054/2009 – 2009/0072(CNS)
Committee responsible	CULT
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	EMPL 17.9.2009
Rapporteur Date appointed	Marian Harkin 21.7.2009
Discussed in committee	4.11.2009
Date adopted	5.11.2009
Result of final vote	+: 45 -: 0 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Edit Bauer, Mara Bizzotto, David Casa, Alejandro Cercas, Ole Christensen, Derek Roland Clark, Sergio Gaetano Cofferati, Tadeusz Cymański, Frédéric Daerden, Karima Delli, Frank Engel, Sari Essayah, Richard Falbr, Ilda Figueiredo, Pascale Gruny, Thomas Händel, Marian Harkin, Roger Helmer, Nadja Hirsch, Vincenzo Iovine, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Veronica Lope Fontagné, Olle Ludvigsson, Elizabeth Lynne, Thomas Mann, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Rovana Plumb, Konstantinos Poupakis, Sylvana Rapti, Elisabeth Schroedter, Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska, Jutta Steinruck, Traian Ungureanu
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Georges Bach, Udo Bullmann, Silvia Costa, Jürgen Creutzmann, Kinga Göncz, Joe Higgins, Gesine Meissner, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Andres Perello Rodriguez, Csaba Sógor, Emilie Turunen, Tatjana Ždanoka, Gabriele Zimmer