



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

2011/2293(INI)

1.3.2012

OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Culture and Education

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

Rapporteur: Marian Harkin

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes that volunteering involves citizens in economically, socially and ecologically sustainable local and cross-border development and can often ensure the swift provision of aid when disasters occur; points out that it also plays a role in fostering solidarity, active citizenship and inter-cultural learning, providing volunteers with the opportunity to learn the language and culture of the country in which they work and thereby strengthening social cohesion and participative democracy;
2. Notes that volunteering contributes to integration, social inclusion and social innovation, and can also contribute to poverty reduction, thus helping to achieve economic and social cohesion; points out that volunteering also promotes solidarity between generations by encouraging cooperation between young people and senior citizens, and that it contributes to active ageing and social involvement in all phases of life, as well as helping to improve environmental protection;
3. Notes that volunteering increases people's tolerance, creates human and social capital and plays a vital role in the empowerment of socially excluded groups; emphasises the need to provide access to as wide a range of volunteering opportunities as possible and encourages the Commission to make European programmes more inclusive and open to all age groups;
4. Notes that older people who engage in volunteering find it easier to make the transition from work to retirement, i.e. gradually to leave active work;
5. Points out that volunteering reduces the risk of social exclusion and that it is essential to attract all social groups into such activities, especially people with disabilities; draws attention to the need to ensure that volunteering becomes more widely recognised and less hampered by barriers of all kinds;
6. Stresses that, although it is an important resource in our economy and society, volunteering must not be an alternative to or a substitute for regular, paid work and must not, under any circumstances, constitute a reason for governments failing to fulfil their social obligations; considers that this aspect should be particularly emphasised in the care sector, where the amount of volunteering is continuing to grow; points out, furthermore, that promoting volunteering as a means of acquiring, developing or maintaining skills should not result in volunteering becoming a mandatory requirement, as this would undermine its fundamental nature;
7. Emphasises the role that volunteer work can play in promoting EU policies;
8. Calls on the Commission, in the context of Europe 2020, to develop and support initiatives focusing chiefly on improving and expanding existing projects and aimed at ensuring that volunteering contributes to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as well

as to make sure that such initiatives can involve a diverse range of participants; calls also on the Commission to assist and encourage Member States in initiatives concerning volunteering, given that the main responsibility lies with Member States;

9. Calls on the Commission to give due recognition to and promote volunteering in relevant EU policies, taking account of the cross-cutting nature of such activities and ensuring that the policies themselves promote the development of volunteering and foster the involvement of all sections of society;
10. Draws attention to the need to promote volunteering, in particular during the European Year of Citizens in 2013, and calls on the Commission to include volunteering support in international development assistance policies, not least with a view to meeting all the targets laid down in the Millennium Development Goals;
11. Urges employers to recognise the value of facilitating volunteering initiatives for their staff as an expression of corporate social responsibility;
12. Calls on the Commission to make the European Skills Passport a reality as soon as possible; emphasises that the skills acquired during volunteering work are also of considerable significance in working life and provide added value to a CV, and notes that volunteering can help young people in their choice of a career; stresses that recognition of competences and skills gained through volunteering as non-formal and informal learning and work experience is essential; notes that voluntary work helps volunteers to broaden their horizons and develop their personalities, and highlights the fact that volunteering also brings economic benefits to Member States, as people who engage in voluntary activities contribute to the generation of GDP;
13. Asks the Commission to ensure that adequate funding is provided for programmes in various policy areas to support cross-border volunteering activities; calls on Member States to actively implement schemes for fostering national and cross-border volunteering; asks for particular attention to be paid to financial support for volunteering infrastructure; maintains that public subsidies for volunteering should be allocated without discrimination against any organisation;
14. Calls on the Commission to give due recognition in EU programmes and projects to the genuine contribution that the work performed by volunteers makes to the community;
15. Proposes that a cross-border network of voluntary organisations in the various Member States should be set up by coordinating the existing voluntary organisations while facilitating the exchange of good practice and experience, and takes the view that new contact points should be opened only in Member States that do not already have such structures;
16. Calls on Member States to promote and implement national schemes for cross-border volunteering, in order to contribute to its development across the EU;
17. Calls on the Commission to allocate adequate resources to the creation of a European Volunteer Centre Development Fund aimed at developing infrastructure to support volunteering;

18. Calls on Member States to ensure legal certainty for volunteers – not least with regard to insurance issues – so that the different regimes in the different Member States encourage cross-border volunteering, and also to ensure better provision of information to volunteers in connection with their rights and the regulatory and institutional arrangements pertaining in the various Member States; calls on the Commission to assist with the process of dismantling existing barriers; calls on Member States to review their cross-border tax and social security arrangements in connection with cross-border volunteering, so as to ensure that they do not raise additional barriers to such activity and that cross-border volunteers are able to receive the social security benefits to which they are entitled under Regulation 2004/883;
19. Calls on Member States to promote training programmes and develop guides and materials on the management of volunteers and schemes to motivate people to engage in cross-border volunteering activities;
20. Calls on the Member States to promote the use of volunteer time as matching funding for European projects, in particular cross-border initiatives;
21. Calls on the Commission to encourage Member States to adopt the ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work in order to ensure robust comparable data which can help improve monitoring and policy-making;
22. Calls on the Commission to propose a mechanism allowing Member States wishing to strengthen civil society to exempt from VAT all or most of the activities and transactions carried out by voluntary non-profit-making organisations; stresses that at least the smaller non-profit-making organisations should be covered by such a mechanism.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	1.3.2012
Result of final vote	+: 39 -: 1 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Regina Bastos, Edit Bauer, Heinz K. Becker, Pervenche Berès, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Philippe Boulland, Milan Cabrnich, Alejandro Cercas, Ole Christensen, Emer Costello, Andrea Cozzolino, Frédéric Daerden, Karima Delli, Sari Essayah, Richard Falbr, Marian Harkin, Nadja Hirsch, Stephen Hughes, Ádám Kósa, Veronica Lope Fontagné, Olle Ludvigsson, Thomas Mann, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Csaba Öry, Konstantinos Poupakis, Licia Ronzulli, Elisabeth Schroedter, Nicole Sinclair, Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska, Jutta Steinruck, Andrea Zannoni, Inês Cristina Zuber
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Georges Bach, Malika Benarab-Attou, Kinga Göncz, Jan Kozłowski, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Gabriele Zimmer
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Phil Bennion, Silvia-Adriana Țicău