

Resolution on European Voluntary Service and the promotion of volunteering in Europe

2016/2872(RSP) - 27/10/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on European Voluntary Service and the promotion of volunteering in Europe.

The text adopted in plenary was adopted by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, GUE/NGL and the Greens/EFA groups.

The European Year of Volunteering 2011 provided the impetus and context for the establishment and/or revision of many national and legal frameworks for volunteering across Europe. In 2016 **the European Voluntary Service (EVS) celebrates its 20th anniversary**. 100 000 volunteers have been supported over those 20 years.

Volunteering is undertaken of a person's own free will, choice and motivation, without their seeking financial gain; it may be defined as a **journey of solidarity** and a way of addressing human, social and environmental needs and concerns. Members noted that the EU's response to the current refugee crisis is a visible symbol of the importance of volunteers and the way that they embody European values.

Towards a European framework: recognising that that volunteering is a key factor in active citizenship and democracy, Parliament highlighted the importance of providing a **European framework for volunteering actions** that identifies rights and responsibilities, and facilitates mobility and **recognition of skills**. It encouraged Member States that still need to define a legal environment for volunteers to:

- establish adequately funded **national voluntary service schemes**;
- improve access to **quality information** on volunteering opportunities at national and local level;
- create **national civic service hubs**, which would also promote international volunteering opportunities to people of all ages;
- **promote the EVS in their educational and academic systems** as a tool to disseminate education for solidarity and civic engagement among the younger generation.

The Commission was asked to facilitate the development of a more coordinated European volunteering policy with a view to establishing a **single contact point in the Commission**, which would interconnect the individual initiatives and programmes and improve access to volunteering programmes.

Better understanding and comparability of skills: Parliament invited Member States to implement concrete validation processes in the framework of the [Council Recommendation](#) of 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Any future **European Skills Passport and Europass initiatives** should give volunteering greater relevance as informal and non-formal learning.

The Commission should consider the economic value of goods and services provided by volunteers through more **volunteer-focused policy making**. In Europe nearly 100 million citizens of all ages are volunteers, whose work contributes to the production of approximately 5 % of its GDP.

Members also suggested supporting the idea of making volunteer time **eligible as co-funding for EU grants**. Eurostat should support Member States in this exercise in order to ensure that comparative data are collected in Europe, as well as developing common EU-wide indicators and methodologies for measuring the social impact of volunteering.

EU Solidarity Corps: Parliament noted the Commission's idea of creating a new European youth volunteering initiative, known as the 'EU Solidarity Corps'. It called on the Commission to assess the **added value** of this initiative, and to ensure that volunteer organisations are included in its design. It further underlined the need to ensure that its implementation will not undermine the budgets already allocated for other programmes.

Ensure sufficient means: recalling that the EVS is based on quality volunteering offers and follows the Volunteering Charter and the principles of the Quality Charter on Learning Mobility, Members considered 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.

The resolution suggested a **simplification** of its current application system and provision of **tax incentives** for volunteer organisations and networks, in particular small organisations with limited resources.

Lastly, Parliament asked the Commission to improve and reshape the **communication strategy** on the EVS by highlighting the social, human and civic value of volunteering.